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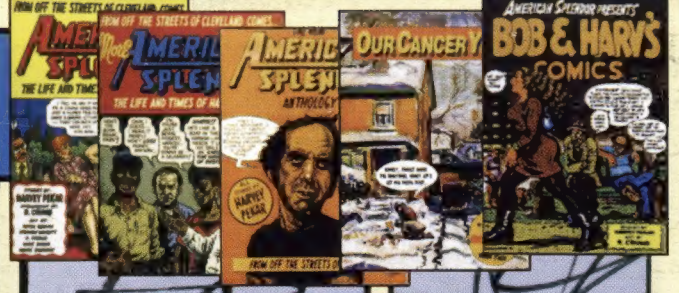

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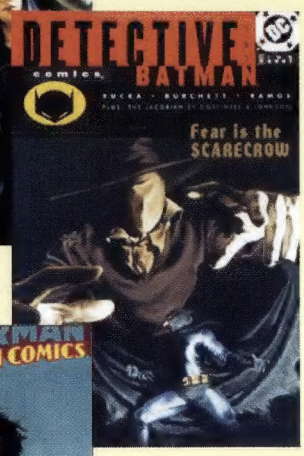

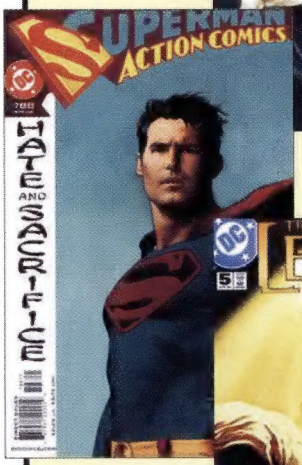

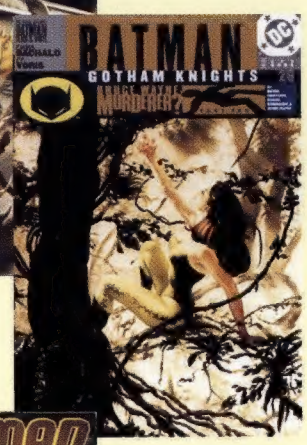

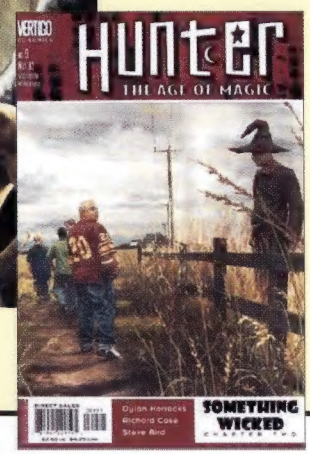

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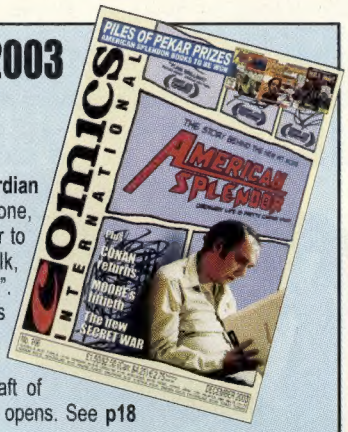
A Quality Communications magazine

#166 DECEMBER 2003



Inside this issue

COVER: We just have to quote **The Guardian** newspaper's John Patterson on this one, "Finally a comic book hero who is easier to identify with than any X-person, Hulk, Daredevil, Terminatrix or Governator". So, forget your preconceived notions about indie, mainstream and other such facetious misnomers. Read our feature, enter our competition, check out the raft of Pekar books and enjoy the film when it opens. See **p18**

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Sez Dez

Editorial

Dez *"So what did you do for your holidays?"* ***Skinn***

FOR MANY reasons, Joe Maneely has long been one of my favourite US comics artists. Who? Right. Even in the Sixties, few in the UK had heard of him. To quote an overused expression, appropriate for Toth, Kurtzman, Raymond and few others over there, he was an artist's artist. When I mentioned his name to Jack Kirby in Lucca eons ago, The King's eyes lit up and he went into overdrive. Stan Lee agrees, admitting that – above Ditko, Buscema, Romita or even Kirby – his top Marvel artist of all time was Maneely.

So you can imagine my delight when I received issue 28 of the ever-fascinating Roy Thomas magazine **Alter Ego** *[Two Morrows Publishing, $5.95]* with 46 pages devoted to the artist behind almost all of Marvel's 1950s successes. That he died tragically in 1958, aged 32, meant he missed the chance to shine as a key figure in Marvel's rebirth a mere three years later.

However, during the days that I spent poring over this exhaustive and exuberant overview of the man behind *The Yellow Claw, Ringo Kid, Black Knight, Speed Carter – Spaceman* and the rest, I received another comics magazine which put things into a totally new perspective.

As a boy, I'd been too young to appreciate **The Eagle**. I was weaned on its junior companion weekly, **Swift**, so my love of the Frank Hampson studio's *Dan Dare* was far less than of those a few years my senior.

But when I looked through Rod Barzilay's 12-years-in-the-making **Spaceship Away** with its newly created Keith Watson and Don Harley pages, the awareness of our own comics heritage came flooding back. As well as those Hulton Press titles of the 1950s, for two decades UK comics led the world through the sheer beauty of art by Embleton, Weir and Holdaway in **Mickey Mouse Weekly** (owing nothing to the Disney studios!), and the glory of Bellamy, Langford and Noble in **TV21**, the wonder of Burns, North and Asbury in **Look-In**. The list goes on, Lawrence's landmark art for **Look & Learn**, plus **Ranger**, **World of Wonder**, **TV Comic** and more.

While the talents of artists in the digest-sized library titles and the mono **Sun**, **Comet**, **Lion** and all is undeniable, there was something about those glossy old colour tabloids which made them shine.

But what made the format so creatively rich? What put to shame the best US work, still struggling with crude benday tints for creaky letterpress machines? Two forgotten words: photogravure printing.

Gone is the age of multi-million weekly sellers whose print allowed this aristocracy of art to flourish. I still cherish Maneely's line work but when next we coin such terms as "best ever", let's view it in a wider context and not forget our own rich history, one that inspired many of the current crop of internationally acclaimed comics creators.

Rod Barzilay certainly hasn't forgotten.

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Ultimate Spider-Man writer puts new spin on Secret Wars

Above: A Gabriele Dell'Otto interior page from the first issue of Marvel's ***Secret War*** *five-parter.*

Brian Michael Bendis brings together Marvel's superheroes for 21st century version of original company-wide event

MARVEL is set to launch a new version of a 1984 series that has come to epitomise the US comics industry at its most crass and commercial.

Hugely successful when first released, **Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars** *[see below]* featured a mass battle against the Beyonder. An omnipotent being, he was created specifically for the series, which is now considered to be little more than a marketing contrivance. It is a criticism **Ultimate Spider-Man** writer Brian Michael Bendis is anxious to avoid with his quarterly **Secret War** five-parter. "This is an entirely different genre, that's how far from the Beyonder this is, but I like the idea that the words 'secret war' conjure; the mystery.

"The enigma of it is what captured our attention lo those many years ago when we first heard the words – the idea that there are secrets we don't know about these characters or a story that we the readers will get that civilians in the Marvel Universe might not is a lot of fun to think about," he added.

Italian newcomer

Joining Bendis – whose credits also include **Alias** and **Powers** – on the standalone mini is Gabriele Dell'Otto, an Italian artist making his US debut. Best known for his covers for European editions of Marvel titles, he is painting all five 48-page issues.

Asked how the project came about, the writer said he has always been intrigued by the idea that there might be a secret connecting a lot of the Marvel Universe villains. "Once someone like Nick Fury figures it out, what will the heroes have to do to fight it?"

Blackhawk Down

"Joe [Quesada] loved the idea and told me it could be a modern spin on **Secret Wars**. A gritty real world take on the notion of a secret superhero war," added Bendis, who said it is Fury who makes the connection. "He puts together a team of heroes that owe him one and that believe in him enough to follow him blindly into this. They also happen to be some of the best selling characters in comic history, who knew?"

In conclusion, the writer proclaimed, "If the first **Secret Wars** was this big planetary cosmic hoo hah, this is as real a fight as it gets in mainstream comics."

Secret War *Book One, priced $3.99, ships on February 4.*

Action figure spin-off opens floodgates

WHAT began as a toy tie-in led to one of the most successful series of the 1980s and changed the face of comics.

In 1984 Mattel approached Marvel with the idea for ***Secret Wars***, a line of action figures based on the publisher's heroes and villains and backed by a complementary comic.

Contest of Champions

Already aware of fan demand for big stories featuring lots of characters and how well 1982's standalone **Marvel Super Heroes Contest of Champions** three-parter had been received, then editor-in-chief Jim Shooter expanded the concept to create the industry's first company-wide event.

While crossovers were nothing new, they usually involved only two series, but Shooter took the idea a step further. As writer of the 12-issue **Marvel Super Heroes Secret Wars**, he integrated the storyline into all the company's superhero titles. He also made the series itself memorable by providing Spider-Man with a new – sentient – costume, killing off the Wasp and introducing a new Spider-Woman.

Sales were phenomenal with each issue selling almost 750,000 copies.

A sequel followed almost immediately as did a whole host of similar series, most notably DC's universe-shattering 1985 12-parter, **Crisis on Infinite Earths**. Company-wide crossovers became almost de rigueur with Shooter repeating his success in 1992 to boost his fledgling Valiant line with **Unity**.

Crossover backlash

But the inevitable backlash came when fans, jaded by the increasingly contrived nature of the stories and put off by the rocketing costs of collecting all the comics, began to greet such crossovers with derision. Such events are now few and far between and **Secret Wars** is often referred to in a derogatory fashion.

Epic line fizzles out

*Above: Andy Kuhn's art for the cover to the first issue of Epic's now-aborted **Young Ancient One** three-parter.*

THE BRAINCHILD of Bill Jemas, Marvel's Epic Comics imprint, did not long outlast its creator's abdication of the publishing throne.

Launched in a blaze of publicity as an outlet for new talent and a haven for creator-owned properties, Epic was touted as having an open door policy for submissions but soon began accepting only work-for-hire projects.

Then, citing a continuing overwhelming response, it shut its doors to all submissions in early October. It was the beginning of the end.

Just weeks later it was learned that the first issues of the next four titles would form an Epic anthology, which would continue on a quarterly basis... if sales warranted it.

But even that anthology is now in jeopardy.

While three of the series now destined for that comic – **Young Ancient One**, **Sleepwalker** and **Strange Magic** – are connected to the Marvel Universe and were produced as work-for-hire, the fourth is creator owned and the creator has taken it back! Michael Sangiacomo is to release his **Phantom Jack** through Image instead.

● To date, only three titles have shipped from Epic.

Two of these, **Trouble** and **Gun Theory**, are mini-series while the third, **Crimson Dynamo**, is being put on hiatus – ostensibly by its creators – with issue #6.

Howard's hero returns

*Former **Avengers** writer switches from superheroes to sword and sorcery for Dark Horse's comics revival of Cimmerian barbarian*

THE ARCHETYPAL sword and sorcery hero is returning to comics after an absence of five years.

Dark Horse is launching its own **Conan** series. Drawn by Cary (**Daredevil**) Nord, the comic is written by **Astro City** creator Kurt Busiek who told **CI** he wants to get back to the original version of the character author Robert E Howard created in 1932.

"In concept, at least," said Busiek, "we're starting out the same way the Marvel **Conan [the Barbarian]** did – picking up Conan as he leaves Cimmeria for the first time and heads off on his long life of adventure. We'll be following him through his adventures, building his history as we go.

"Whenever we get to one of the points where a Howard story takes place, we'll adapt that story, and then roll on with Conan's life 'til the next one," the former **Avengers** writer explained. "So in that way, I guess we're similar to the Marvel approach – though it's 30 years later, times and techniques have changed, and we'll be dealing with it all in our own way."

Busiek said this meant he and Nord could show more violence, did not have to keep Conan in a recognisable 'costume' and could spread stories over more issues.

"And much as I admire what Roy Thomas and company did with **Conan**, we're not looking to the Marvel series for our inspiration. We want to start over, to get back to the roots of Conan as REH wrote him, and capture that on paper as well as we can. Everything's built on the REH stories," he concluded.

***Conan** #1, priced $2.99, ships on February 4.*

*Above: Joseph Michael Linsner's art for the cover to the first issue of Dark Horse's ongoing **Conan** series.*

DC's flawed heroine to get own series

GAIL Simone is reviving one of DC's lesser known but most complex heroines.

In collaboration with **Fantastic Four Unplugged** penciller Adriana Melo and Dan (**Uncanny X-Men**) Green, the **Birds of Prey** writer is bringing back Rose and Thorn to star in her own six-parter. A victim of Multiple Personality Disorder brought on by witnessing her police detective father's murder, the character was created by writer Robert Kanigher, who introduced her in **Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane** #105 [1970].

*Above: Adam Hughes' cover art for the second issue of DC's **Rose & Thorn** six-parter.*

Discussing the project, which she considers *Year One* for Kanigher's creation, Simone said, "**Rose & Thorn** is a story of an extremely troubled young girl, and a cure that's possibly worse than the disease. For all the good therapy and medications can do – and there are millions who have benefited from such treatment – in the wrong hands they're as dangerous as physical abuse and arsenic. We touch on a lot of serious issues, such as the increasing warehousing of disturbed kids in frankly inappropriate facilities with overwhelmed staffs.

"The truth is, if we ever get costumed crime fighters in the real world, the odds are that they're much more likely to come from a mental health facility than from Krypton," she observed.

***Rose & Thorn** #1, priced $2.95, ships on December 17.*

*MUCH as Marv Wolfman and George Perez condensed all of DC's alternate realities into one in 1985's **Crisis on Infinite Earths**, so **Crimson** co-creator F G [Francisco] Haghenbeck and one-time **Impulse** artist Carlos Barberi intend to do to the real world in a $2.95 Image series. Their **Alternation** features an alternate timeline where a strange astronomic-time phenomenon has caused all of Earth's history to exist at the same time. It is set in a 19th century where dinosaurs coexist alongside zeppelins and Germany has invaded America. The first issue* [wraparound cover above] *ships on February 4.*

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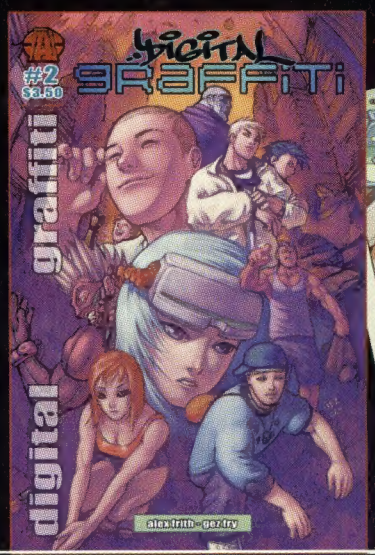

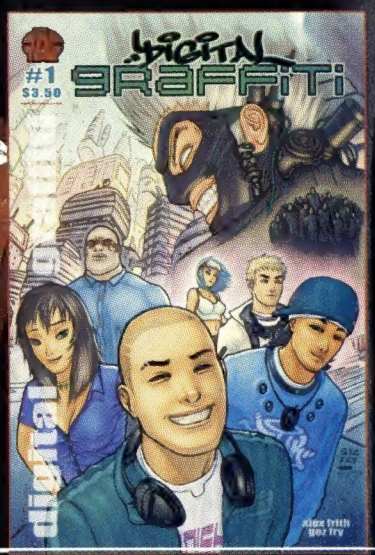

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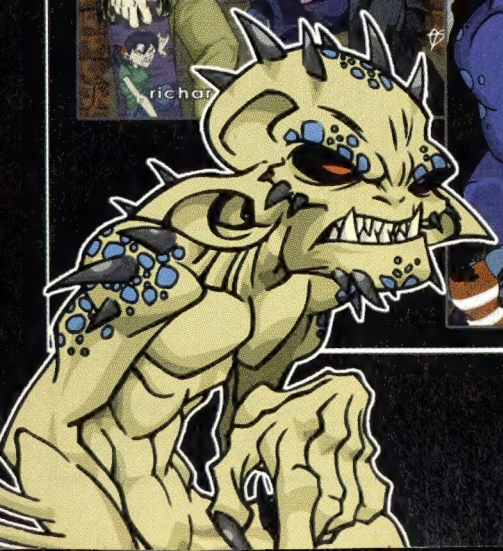

Faro Korbit #1,2
(certified cool! - dcd)

Monster Club #1,2
(spotlight on- dcd)

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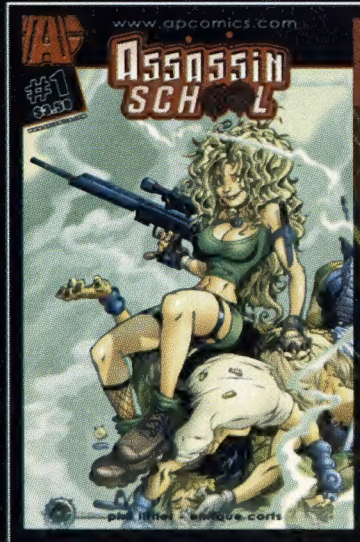

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STORMRIDERS' *Wing Shing Ma is adapting Zhang Yimou's Oscar-nominated* Hero *for ComicsOne. Set for a summer release in the US, the movie stars Jet Li as a loyal citizen who attempts to prevent the assassination of the soon-to-be Emperor of China. Ma's 128-page graphic novel, which features an alternate ending approved by the film's creator, ships in February, priced $16.95.*

Wild Hunt for Lady Death

ALTHOUGH **Lady Death: A Medieval Tale** ends in January with #12 it is not the end for the latest incarnation of the anti-heroine Brian Pulido *[above]* introduced in 1991.

On February 25 the former Chaos! Comics head is to launch **Lady Death: The Wild Hunt** in collaboration with **Scion** penciller Jim Cheung. A $2.95 CrossGen/Code 6 title, it picks up the storyline a year after the cliffhanger ending of its predecessor.

Pulido says the story, which is crafted for new and existing readers, begins with Lady Death and her group as underdogs. "Europe is ruled by the Eldritch, an ancient magical race out to extinguish humanity.

"It's up to Lady Death and her band to stop them," the Tony Blair lookalike added. "But Lady Death's father was Eldritch and her mother was human. That makes Lady Death look like an Eldritch. She's hated by the very people she wants to save."

Above: Jim Cheung's cover art for the first issue of Brian Pulido's latest ***Lady Death*** *series, CrossGen/Code 6's* ***The Wild Hunt****.*

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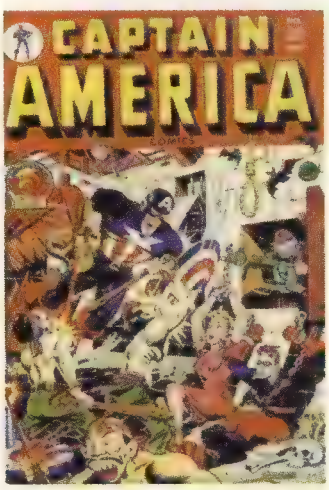

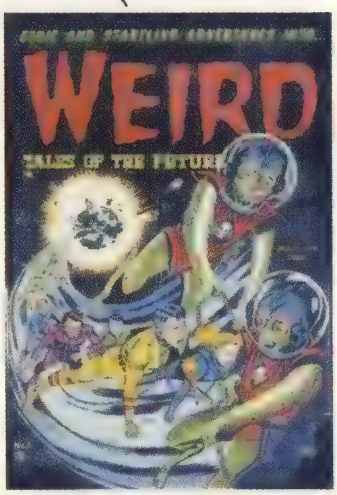

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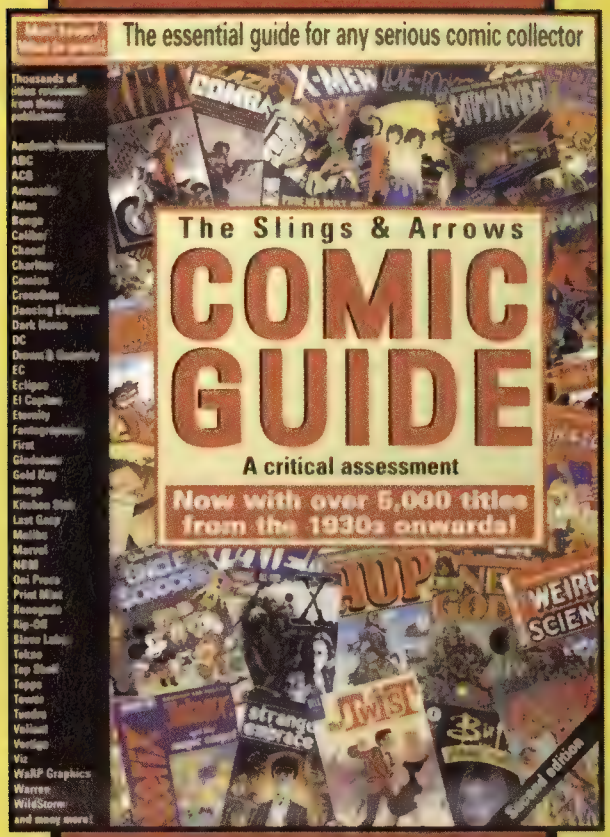
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BONE *comes to an end in December with #55. Shown above is the cover to the 48-page final issue of the black and white Cartoon Books series Jeff Smith launched to great acclaim in 1991. The $2.95 comic concludes the 1300-page epic, freeing the writer/artist to develop* ***Shazam!: The Monster Society of Evil*** *for DC. The four-issue prestige format Captain Marvel series is due for release late next year.*

Marvel relaunches to showcase new talent

THE DEATH of the anthology comic, made up of several short strips, has left major publishers with no vehicle for up and coming writers and artists to hone their craft, knowing a title would sell off the back of its established lead creators.

Marvel is to address this problem by reviving two titles for new writers, backed by experienced artists.

First published as quarterly 68-pagers in 1993, **X-Men Unlimited** and **Spider-Man Unlimited** are being relaunched as alternating bimonthlies.

First out of the gate is **Spider-Man Unlimited**, which was also the title of a short-lived 1999 tie-in with the animated TV series. The first issue contains two new stories – one pencilled by former **Iron Man** artist Sean Chen, the other by Takeshi Miyazawa, who drew Oni Press's **Sidekicks** three-parter.

Spider-Man Unlimited*, priced $2.99, ships on January 7.*

Above: Promotional art for the first issue of Marvel's relaunched ***Spider-Man Unlimited****; produced by Shinkiro, a Capcom computer games artist.*

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In Brief

MARVEL has scored a major point in the race for exclusivity on top-selling writers and artists.

The latest name it has signed up is Alan Davis, rumoured to be developing a new X-title with his old **Excalibur** writer Chris Claremont. But Marvel-only work will not kick in until he has completed **Another Nail**, his follow up to **JLA: The Nail**.

However, a Marvel mainstay has slipped through the net as John Romita Jr is developing a creator-owned three-parter for Image Comics.

Written by Glen Brunswick, who scripted 2000's *Frequency* movie, the 120-page **Grey Area** is currently unscheduled.

Titans writer Jay Faerber is developing a new **Codename: Strikeforce** title for Top Cow.

PANELSYS is offering a free on-line *Comics Guide* to anyone purchasing version 2.1 of its comics tracking system before the end of January.

The guide and the latest *PanelSys* are available for download from panelsys.com

BIZARRE as it may seem, reports have it that DC, Marvel, Dark Horse and DreamWave are competing with children's book publisher Scholastic Inc in an attempt to acquire US rights to Vietnam's top-selling comic.

Than dong dat Viet, a 38-volume series that translates as **Vietnamese Prodigies**, focuses on quick-witted hero Trang Ti while the plots revolve around actual historical events with each issue also featuring folk games and quizzes.

THE much-delayed Warren Ellis conclusion to the **Ministry of Space** three-parter is finally nearing completion.

Image has now rescheduled the $2.95 Chris Weston-drawn comic to ship next April – almost three years late.

ANTONY Johnston's latest Oni Press project is **Spooked**, a 168-page black and white book about an artist inspirated by ghosts who have now deserted her.

Johnston is best-known for his Avatar adaptations of obscure Alan Moore material including *Another Suburban Romance*. His script is drawn by the flash-back artist on Oni's **Too Much Hopeless Savages**, the critically acclaimed Ross Campbell, whose work has been likened to **Vertigo Pop London**'s Philip Bond. The digest-sized $14.95 softcover ships on February 25.

STEPHEN Weiner, author of the poorly-received **101 Best Graphic Novels** is offering an overview of the format in a new 6x9" NBM hardcover.

His 80-page **Rise of the Graphic Novel** ships in February, priced $14.95.

TokyoPop adds more CLAMP

WHAT started out as a band of female artists producing doujinshi [fan comics] has grown into an elite group producing some of the most commercially successful manga available to English speaking readers.

Of the dozen that started CLAMP only Mick Nekoi, Mokona Apapa, Nanase Ohkawa and Satsuki Igarashi remain but these four are responsible for titles like **Chobits** – which broke into Bookmark's Top 20 Trade Paperback list – **Magic Knight Rayearth** and **Cardcaptor Sakura**.

CLAMP's US publisher, TokyoPop, is continuing to expand its list of the group's titles. The latest addition is **Tokyo Babylon**, which is described as a manga version of *The X-Files*.

The series – which runs to seven black and white volumes – begins next May.

***UNCANNY X-Men**'s Chuck Austen is replacing Geoff Johns on **Avengers** in January's #77 where he joins series penciller Olivier Coipel. Shown above is John Cassaday's cover art for the issue, which Marvel is retailing at 50¢ to promote the change of writer.*

Missing years unveiled

*Former **Catwoman** artist Darwyn Cooke uses prestige format mini to explore DC Universe between end of Golden Age to dawn of Silver Age*

THE LIVES of members of the JLA in the years before the League was founded are to be chronicled in a prestige format DC series.

Consisting of six 64-page issues, **The New Frontier** is written and drawn by Darwyn (**Catwoman**) Cooke, who said, "I don't know how you would classify the story but what I've done is go back to the original time frame in which the characters were introduced. The entire story takes place against the historic and political backdrop of that era.

"So we're looking at the race for Space, America trying to beat the Communists," he explained. "We're taking these kind of historical elements of what America was like at that time and trying to get to the heart of what it was that made these particular men the ideal characters that have become these heroes."

According to Cooke, Hal Jordan is to be the main focus of the series. "He's definitely the character that interests me the most. And he's the one that probably reflects the modern American man.

"There's a wonderful transition time from the way people used to think – I call it the Eisenhower era – and then there's the Kennedy era. And I think Hal's the perfect vehicle to explain the transition America went through at that time," he added.

***The New Frontier** #1, priced $6.95, ships on January 21.*

Banzai Girl pops back

JINKY Coronado is bringing her comicbook alter ego back to Sirius for a one-shot.

Once again working with **Battle of the Planets** artist Wilson Tortosa, the Filipino comics creator told **CI** that her **Banzai Girl Annual** continues what she says is best described as the fancified schoolgirl adventures of writer/artist/model Jinky Coronado.

As with the earlier **Banzai Girl** four-parter, the new comic features a Filipino legend – in this case the Manananggal. "This is the much-scarier Filipino version of a vampire, a creature who can separate herself at the waist, flying around with bloody intestines all hanging out... who finds pregnant mothers to suck out the unborn babies.

"Wilson thought I was getting too gross with some of the pages," she said then laughingly added, "Did I mention this is a *fun* book?"

***Banzai Girl Annual** #1, priced $3.50, ships in December.*

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In Brief

MARVEL is trimming back its $2.99 manga influenced *Tsunami* line of titles.

Sean McKeever and UDON's **Sentinel** and **Namor** – written by Bill Jemas and Andi Watson and pencilled by Joe Bennett – are both to finish in February with #12.

POSSIBLY prompted by its continuing cash flow crisis, CrossGen has sold off its annual Megacon gathering.

The Orlando Florida-based convention has been bought back by Beth Widera, the event's original director. She said the change will have no affect on plans for next year's programme, which runs over the weekend of March 5 to 7.

OFTEN overlooked by a superhero-obsessed market, Archie Comics just keeps plugging away.

Betty & Veronica hits a milestone when its $2.99 issue #200 ships on March 31. Not bad for a title that debuted in 1950 and was relaunched after 341 issues.

GEORGE Pérez's **Wonder Woman** work is to be collected by DC.

A series of four trade paperbacks are to reprint the 24 issues of the comic he relaunched in 1987. The first volume – the 192-page **Wonder Woman: Gods and Mortal** – contains issues #1-7. It ships on February 18, priced $19.95.

DABEL Brothers Productions – formerly Roaring Studio – has acquired the rights to Robert Silverberg's **Majipoor Chronicles**.

The first project under the licence is to be a storybook adaptation of *The Seventh Shrine*, which first appeared in 2001's Silverberg-edited **Legends: Short Novels by the Masters of Modern Fantasy** anthology. Illustrated by European artist Anders Finer, it is to be published via Devil's Due in the spring.

DARK Horse has cancelled its **Al Williamson: Hidden Lands** trade paperback.

Priced $$2.95, the 224-page black and white softcover was to be a collection of stories the former EC artist had drawn for such publishers as Atlas, Charlton, Dell and Harvey. It was to ship on December 10 but is believed to have been pulled due to a poor trade response.

ALTHOUGH it offered no reason for the sudden move, Marvel has pulled Daniel Way's much-delayed **Deathlok: Detour** mini from the schedule.

Pencilled by Darick Robertson, the $2.99 MAX four-parter was to have premiered on January 14. It is to be rescheduled for an as-yet unspecified later date.

*FOLLOWING her starring roles in a handful of Avatar minis, Billy Tucci is taking Ana Ishiakawa – the avenging assassin better known as Shi – to Dark Horse. There she is to feature in **Shi: Ju-Nen**. A four-parter, it is being released in the spring to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the launch of **Shi: The Way of the Warrior** by the writer/artist's own Crusade Entertainment.*

Lucifer writer to revive WetWorks

MIKE Carey is resurrecting one of WildStorm's original super-teams.

Introduced in 1992 in the second issue of Image's **WildCATS: Covert Action Teams** mini, WetWorks was created by Whilce Portacio. The Filipino artist – who most recently drew **Storm-Watch: Team Achilles** – is joining Carey on the relaunch of his team's own monthly title, which DC/WildStorm has lined up for the spring.

"It's about a world in which humanity shares the world it lives in with a number of much older races – the night tribes – who are based on the human template but have very different lives and cultures. We're talking here about vampires, werewolves and other beings that we don't even have myths about," explained Carey, the British **Lucifer** writer.

"Real" Clark Kent revealed

FORMER **Avengers** writer Kurt Busiek is teaming up with his artist partner on **Shock Rockets**, Stuart Immonen, for a four-issue prestige format series that looks at the trials and tribulations of a boy who has the misfortune to be named Clark Kent.

Earth-Prime

Discussing his **Superman: Secret Identity**, Busiek – who also writes **Astro City** and **Arrowsmith** – said, "This isn't the DC Universe. He's just a guy who looks like Clark Kent, who grew up in Kansas, and who, all his life, has dealt with people making the obvious jokes."

The four-parter is, says Busiek, inspired by Elliott S Maggin and Curt Swan's *Origin of Superboy Prime* from **DC Comics Presents** #87 [1985]. "We're doing something very different with our story, but I doubt it would have happened if not for that issue. I really liked that character, and wanted to see more of him – but, well, they blew up Earth-Prime in **Crisis On Infinite Earths** and that took away the context that made that Superboy special, the part that really that interested me."

Teenage crisis

This "real world" Kent's life changes radically when he suddenly manifests the most amazing powers. "Clark goes through an identity crisis, as many teenagers do. His, though, is super-powered, which makes for a really big difference."

Within its 48-page issues, **Secret Identity** focuses on Kent at different points throughout his life: as a teenager, a young adult, a husband, a father and as an older man facing retirement.

"He lives a life – a life shaped in part by his amazing powers – and tries to be the best person he can, but he's far more concerned with regular old human issues than he is with stopping mad scientists," concluded Busiek.

I must have pinched myself a million times
But it was true. I didn't know how, and I didn't much care. But I had the powers. I had Superman's powers.
I could fly. I could see all the way to Wichita--even farther, if I wanted. I could hear the tiniest sounds--owls beating their wings, a brook rippling twenty miles away.
I was fast. I could change direction like a hummingbird.
Even when I was like a mile up, I wasn't cold.

*Above: A Stuart Immonen interior page from the first 48-page issue of DC's prestige format **Superman: Secret Identity** four-parter. The $5.95 series premieres on January 14.*

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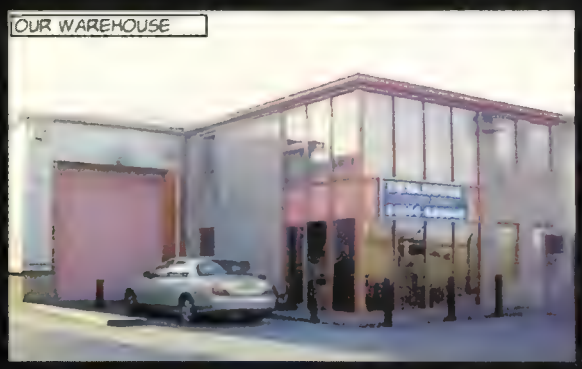

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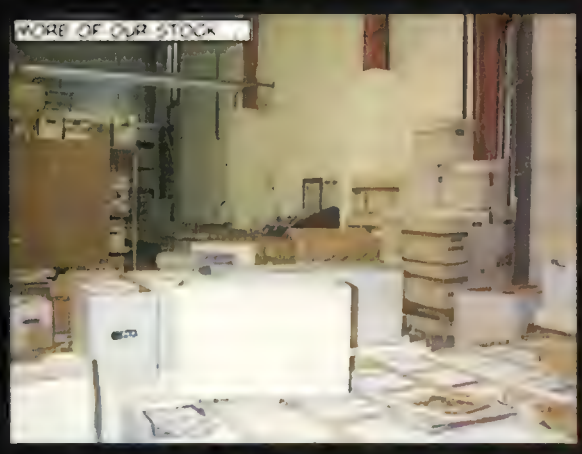

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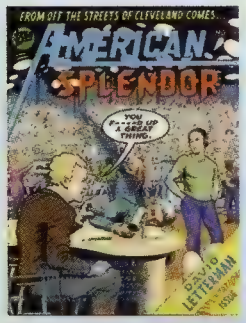
Pekar's Prime Picks

Issue #1 - The 1976 premiere issue "celebrated" the US's Bi-Centennial and had Robert Crumb featured on the cover masthead as a major selling point.



Issue #14 - Pekar fights David Letterman live on national TV by accusing the talk show host and the NBC Network of being corporate stooges of General Electric. The writer was banned from the show. The defence rests.

Issue #17 - When Pekar was diagnosed with cancer, he handed over the reins to Dark Horse with this issue, ending 17 years of self-publishing. Artists included Jim Wooding and Paul Mavrides.

Special 25th Anniversary Issue - Featuring Pekar stories illustrated by comics journalist Joe (**Palestine**) Sacco and underground comix legend Frank Stack alias Foolbert Sturgeon – best known for his **The New Adventures of Jesus** series.

A comic hero you can believe in

The comics to movie bandwagon relentlessly roles on, but American Splendor *makes a refreshing change from big screen spandex.* ***CI*** *looks at the award-winner opening in the UK on January 2.*

Special movie feature by **TIM PILCHER**

THE RECENT glut of big comicbook movies – some blockbusters (*X-2* and *Hulk*) others less so (*LXG* and *Daredevil*) – have all been big productions with larger-than-life storylines. So it seems unlikely that the pitch for *American Splendor: The Movie* would have got the big Hollywood execs excited: "Downtrodden, twice divorced loser filing clerk from Cleveland, Ohio starts writing his own comicbook and finds love and a family through it."

Where's the multi-million dollar SFX and lavish costumes and sets?

Where are the A-list superstars and explosions?

Not in this picture. Yet directors Bob Pulcini and Shari Springer Berman have created one the best, and most faithful, comicbook adaptations in a long time.

Released on 4 January, the film follows Harvey Pekar's mundane existence as he works in a veterans hospital and spends his spare time scouring thrift stores for old records. It is during one of these shopping trips that he meets a then-unknown Robert Crumb and the two strike up a friendship. Crumb inspires Pekar to pick up a pen and start jotting down his life experiences, a series of vignettes about his life. "I just wanted to tell it like it is. I wanted to write comic books that dealt with the mundane experiences of life."

In a medium dominated by superheroes, his muted slice-of-life parables are a breath of fresh air – and the industry's longest-lived autobiographic title.

As to the unusual name, "It was an ironic title," explained the husky-voiced balding writer, "Nothing in my life was splendid." Certainly, after two failed marriages things were looking bleak for Pekar. But when Crumb offered to draw his stories, the writer released the first issue of **American Splendor** in 1976 and continued to self-publish on a semi-annual basis until the 1990s when Dark Horse took over the business side.

Love sick

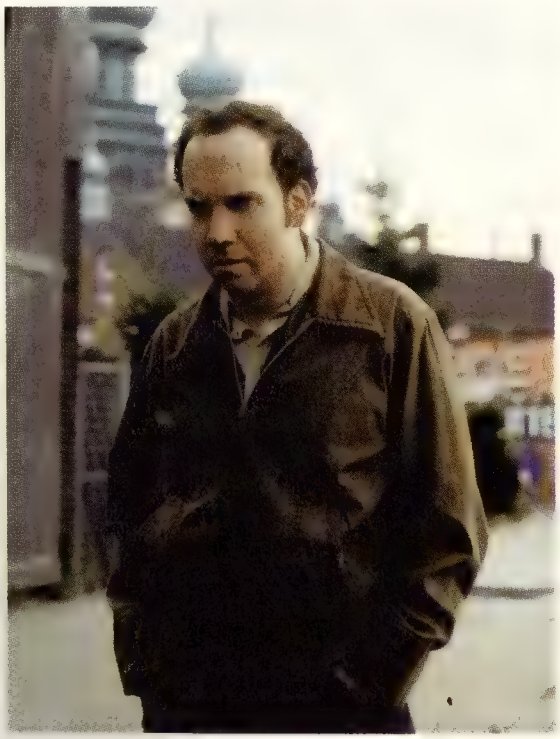
After several years writing and self-publishing (and working with various artists – from Gerry Shamray to Kevin Brown) Pekar struck up a long distance relationship with a comic store owner, Joyce Brabner. The romance was not without its difficulties and on their first date she contracted food poisoning. But this was a turning point in Pekar's life as he finally found his soulmate and they married the following day.

Brabner, excellently played by Hope Davis, is an integral part of the film and is just as sharp and witty as her husband. "We expect to have it rough sometimes. But he's stuck with me and I'm stuck with him."

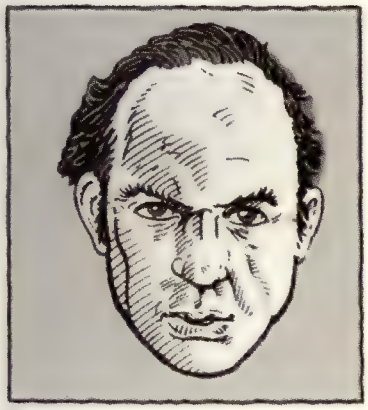
Harvey Pekar isn't a particularly remarkable man. In fact he's as average as you can get. And yet this archetypal blue-collar worker fast became a cult figure. When the *American Splendor* stage play was produced in L.A., Pekar was fittingly played by Dan Castellaneta, the voice of Homer Simpson, another great blue collar hero.

Pekar was then invited onto the David Letterman Show in the Eighties. The two hit it off and Pekar soon became a regular on the show as the "average Joe" everyman foil to Letterman's supposedly good-natured jibes. But it all came to a head when Pekar, sick of playing the stooge, went on air and attacked the NBC network over the current writers strike. Pekar was banned from the show and Letterman himself told the writer, "You fucked up a great thing". The two finally resolved their differences and Pekar made two more appearances in the early 1990s, but still the filing clerk remains unrepentant, "Letterman deserved it!"

In 1990 Pekar contracted lymphatic cancer and spent a painful time going through chemotherapy, all of which was recorded by him and Brabner in the emotionally-wrought graphic novel, **Our Cancer Year** – illustrated



Paul Giamatti, fresh from monkeying around on Planet of the Apes, *puts on weight, doesn't shave and generally acts the slob getting into the role of Harvey Pekar. "He looks nothing like me!" complained the writer.*



Above: As Harvey Pekar is happy to admit he's no good at drawing, dozens of artists have portrayed him in his autobiographical stories over the years, including (left to right) Dan Haspiel, Robert Crumb (Pekar's first collaborator and inspiration for the filing clerk to write comics) and Gary Dumm.

by Frank Stack (called Fred in the film, but that's another story). Ultimately it was this collaboration that brought the final piece of the puzzle together when Pekar and Brabner eventually adopted Stack's daughter, Danielle.

More than any other word curmudgeon is used to describe Pekar and it's this very world view that makes him infuriating yet refreshing and endearing. He calls the shots as he sees them and doesn't suffer fools gladly.

There is a true warmth and respect for human beings in his work and the film is ultimately uplifting. But Pekar remains cynical about his latest burst of international fame, "I don't think it'll increase sales. I had a similar experience on Letterman. You'd think millions of people seeing you on TV would mean some would pick up the comic. But it ain't so."

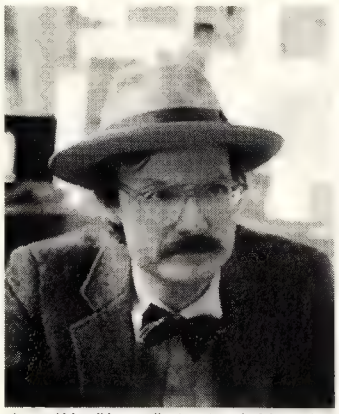
Multimedia Pekar

What makes *American Splendor* work as a film is the seamless merging of the comicbook, the movie and reality. Part documentary, part bio-pic. We see the real Pekar interacting with the actor, Paul Giamatti, playing him and Giamatti being harassed by cartoon versions of Pekar.

It sounds chaotic and in the hands of lesser directors would have fallen flat on its face, but Pulcini and Springer Berman pull it off with aplomb. So much so that the film has been feted at all the world film festivals, winning awards at Cannes and Edinburgh and the Grand Jury prize at Sundance.

Giamatti excels as Pekar, getting his mannerisms and body posture uncannily accurate despite only being brought to the picture a few weeks before filming began. The two have become friends, as Brabner points out, "they have a lot in common. They both read and hoard a lot of books".

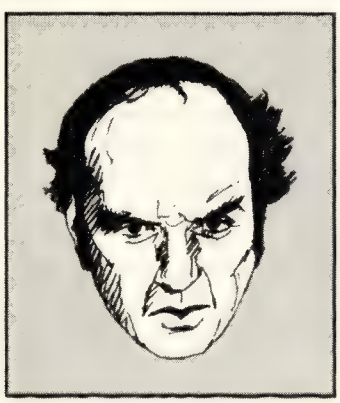
While Pekar retired from his filing clerk job ("the second-lowest government pay rate") in 2001 after 35 years, he intends to doggedly continue recording his life experiences, and of those around him, for some time yet; "When I get tired of people, that's when I'll get tired of writing."



James Urbanik's excellent portrayal of legendary underground cartoonist, R Crumb. The artist was also the subject of another classic comicbook bio-pic, Crumb, *by his pal Terry Zwigoff in 1994.*

Hope Davis plays Joyce Brabner, Pekar's long-suffering, yet supportive, wife.

The real star of the film, Pekar's colleague Toby Radloff. Self-confessed "genuine nerd" Radloff became a cult hero via Pekar's success, starring on MTV and in a series of low-budget movies including Killer Nerd *and* Townies.



Above: More of the many comics (if not comic) faces of Harvey Pekar by long term collaborators Gerry Shamray (left) and Josh Neufeld.

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Please also complete the following:
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All entries must be postmarked before January 10th, 2004

CUT OUT COUPON ALONG DOTTED LINE

*THE NEW York City Comic Book Museum is moving into publishing with the tentatively-titled **True Stories: NYPD**. A fund raiser for the museum – which currently only exists in cyberspace – this black and white hardcover is a companion to* Heroes Among Us: The Art of 9-11 *exhibition. The $10 softcover featuring adventures lived by past and current members of the city's police department is available through* nyccomicbookmuseum.org *Among those contributing to the 32-page volume are Stan Lee, David Lloyd, Ho Che Anderson and Rodolfo Migliari* [see art above]. *A limited edition hardcover is available for an additional $5.*

DC unearths Teen Titans graphic novel

*George Pérez follows much-delayed **Avengers vs JLA** mini by reuniting with writer Marv Wolfman to complete another aborted team title*

AFTER finally completing the Avengers/Justice League of America crossover that he had begun for a previous generation's management in 1981, artist George Pérez is embarking on another project that has languished in development hell – this time since 1989.

He is teaming up with his **New Teen Titans** co-creator, Marv Wolfman, to resurrect **Games**, a 120-page graphic novel featuring their version of DC's team of super-powered youngsters.

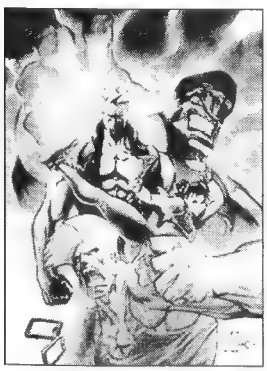
"This is a standalone story that would have affected continuity had it come out in '89, but now needs to have a timeless feel to it," Wolfman said of the project, which is suddenly being fast tracked for release next Christmas.

*Above: A frame from **Teen Titans: Games**, the DC graphic novel artist George Pérez began in 1988.*

CrossGen problems surface at Image

THERE is a chance the US comics industry may soon repeat its 1970s period with Marvel and DC almost monopolising the market and bit player Charlton replaced by an ever-changing roster of smaller publishers.

The Big Two already account for about 70% of total direct market sales while main competitors appear to be fragmenting or, like Dark Horse, ploughing their resources into the more lucrative market of manga.



*Above: Alvin Lee's cover art for issue #6 of **Streetfighter**, the latest title to leave Image.*

The financial crisis that struck CrossGen has been well-documented of late but the Florida-based company's difficulties now appear to be impacting on Image.

Having left Image for CrossGen, Devil's Due chose not to return to its former home when CrossGen's troubles put its own future in jeopardy. Instead it decided to go solo with **G.I. Joe** and its other titles.

That decision has led others to leave Image for the fledgling indie. Among them are Roaring Studios with its ***Dragonlance*** tie-in and UDON Studios, which is to begin publishing its successful **Street Fighter** series under the new banner starting in April with #7.

TwoMorrows acts to help preserve Kirby archives

*Above: Jack Kirby's unadorned pencils for an interior page from TwoMorrows' 52-page **Captain Victory: Graphite Edition**.*

THE PUBLISHER of **The Jack Kirby Collector** is working with the heirs of the artist many consider the King of Comics to preserve a huge archive of photocopies of his pencilled artwork.

Kirby began copying his pencils in the 1960s but he used a copier similar to a thermal fax machine and the copies are now in danger of fading away.

An operation is being mounted to rescue over 4,000 pages of Kirby art – much of it from Marvel's Silver Age – by scanning and restoring the pencilled images. To help fund this TwoMorrows is to publish a 52-page **Captain Victory: Graphite Edition**.

The 7x10" black and white softcover reproduces Kirby's pencilled pages to present his 1975 **Captain Victory** graphic novel as he originally intended it – before it was restructured for use by Pacific Comics for the launch of a regular **Captain Victory** comic in 1981.

***Captain Victory: Graphite Edition**, priced $5.95, ships on March 3.*

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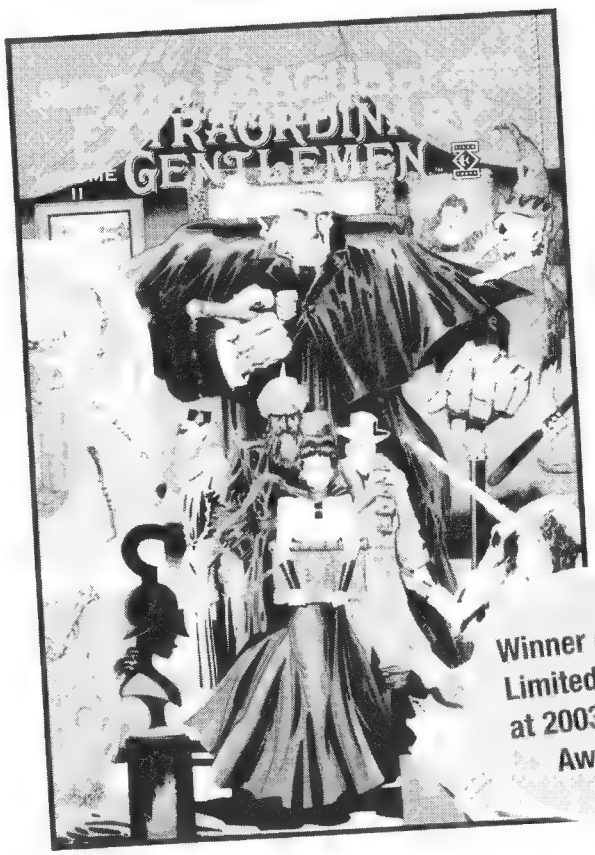

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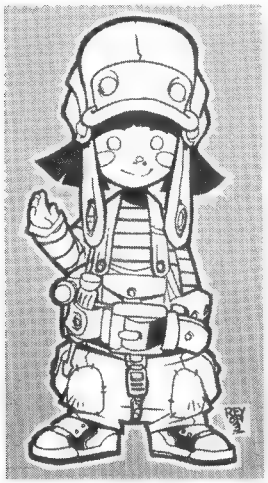
Busters for Com.X



THE near-dormant Com.X is maintaining a discreet silence over its plans for a relaunch, but one creator has released details of a seven-parter he is developing for a summer 2004 release by the London-based publisher.

Also completing Com.X's **Bazooka Jules** mini, DreamWave's **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** artist LeSean Thomas, who says his **Cannon Busters** is *Wizard of Oz* on ecstacy. "Imagine *Alice in Wonderland* but replace the girl with a robot."

The series is pencilled by newcomer Corey 'Rey' Lewis *[art left]*.

John Tartaglione 1921-2003

VETERAN comics creator John Tartaglione died in early November after a prolonged battle against throat cancer. He was 82.

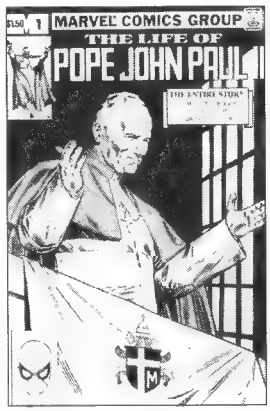
Born in 1921, Tartag as he was known received his art training at the Pratt Institute and the Traphagen School of Fashion. He began his career in the early 1940s, working as a production artist for Harvey Comics and later Bernard Bailey.

His first solo work began appearing in the mid-1950s on such Atlas/Marvel titles titles as **Journey Into Mystery** and **Spellbound**.

During the 1960s he contributed to **Treasure Chest**, **Classics Illustrated** and Dell's **Burke's Law** and **Ben Casey** among other titles before returning to Marvel where he inked series including **Daredevil**, **Sgt. Fury** and **X-Men**.

He eventually rose to become Marvel's art director.

The inker on the *Spider-Man* daily strip until his death, Tartag's best known work was 1982's **Life of Pope John Paul II**.



Above: The cover to 1982's ***The Life of Pope John Paul II****. The Marvel one-shot was artist John Tartaglione's best-known work – it sold millions worldwide through religious outlets.*

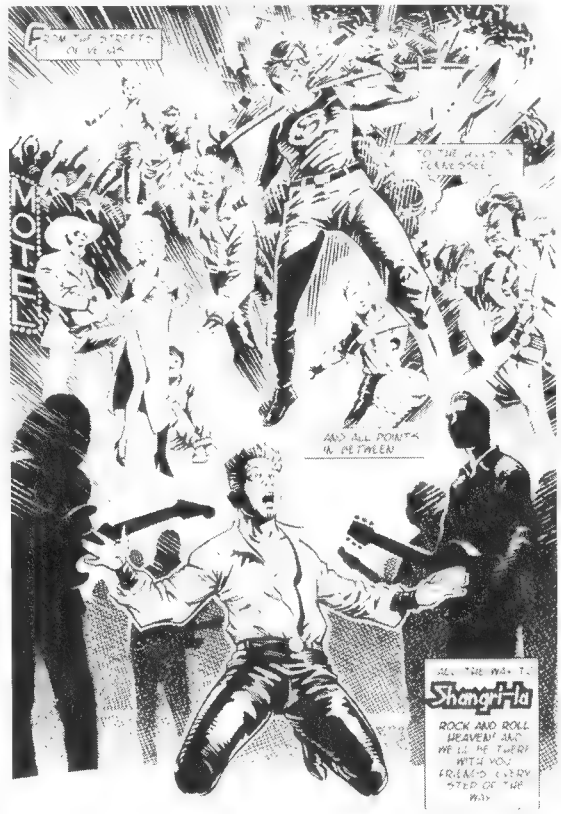
Mary Worth writer

JOHN P Saunders died in Toledo, Ohio on November 15 at the age of 79. The cause of death was complications from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Saunders, who had been writing *Mary Worth* since 1979, took over the newspaper strip from his father, after a 33-year career in radio and television. He also wrote *Steve Roper*, which his father was already scripting when he created *Mary Worth* – one of the longest-running continuity strips – in 1938.

He is survived by his wife, a brother and two sisters.

Above: A recent Mary Worth *daily strip, written by John P Saunders and drawn by Joe Giella.*



Shangri-La comes to Image

WITH one graphic novel already to his credit, Marc Bryant is teaming up with DC's **Restaurant at the End of the Universe** artist Shepherd Hendrix for his second, which he describes as rock'n'roll noir.

"I wanted to do a story about rock and roll that showed how much I love it, without looking like a 'wannabe' – which I am," explained Bryant, the author of Cyberosia's **Overtime**.

Asked to describe the basic premise of **Shangri-La**, a black and white Image 72-pager, he responded, "The solicitation copy says it pretty well I think. When a burned out assassin backs out of a hit on a has been rock star, the two are set on a wild chase across America, forced to do their best not to kill each other before they can turn the tables on the record label that wants them dead.

"The rock star, Correy Stinson, is inspired by the talented rock stars that seemed to start taking themselves more seriously than their music. In my eyes, it's a pretty long list," he added.

Shangri-La*, priced $7.95, ships on January 14.*

CI #164 competition winners

IN **CI** #164, ten readers had the chance to win a copy of the new **Slings & Arrows** comics guide. Copies of the 782 page book have been sent to:

Steve Chandler, Alperton
M Donaghue, Henbury
H Kildea, New Southgate
David Little, Manchester
R May, Weston-Super-Mare
Robert McIntyre, Wakefield
David Roe, Aylesbury
S Shaw, Maindee, Newport
Robert Todd, Middlesbrough
Chris Walker, Grantham

Reader votes scored the 10 most popular sections of **CI** #158 as:

1 News International (21.1%)
2 Reviews (14.4%)
3 Advance Listings (8.6%)
4 NetWorks (8.3%)
5 Q&A (7.2%)
6 Letters/Comic Cuts (7.1%)
7 Q&A (5.1%)
8 Competition (3.8%)
9 Sez Dez (3.4%)
10 Talking Shop (3.3%)

The highest scoring section as the least popular feature was "None, they're all fine" at 27.8%, with Novel Graphics second at 16.7%. Panel Beaters came third at 8.9% which may explain why it's called "small" press.

In Brief

AS IF Chaos! Comics didn't have enough problems, the court handling its bankruptcy has hit CrossGen for an additional $15,000 in respect of its purchase of the rights to Brian Pulido's Lady Death.

It originally acquired the property for $12,500 just two weeks before Pulido shut the doors on his Arizona-based company in August 2002.

TWO PROFESSORS from the Savannah College of Art & Design have produced a 144-page graphic novel that teaches how to create comics while telling the story of a classroom full of students being taught the art.

Shipping from NBM in January, the black and white **Bristol Board Jungle** is by Mark Kneece and Bob Pendarvis. A 6x9" softcover, it is priced $11.95.

BRUNO Maglione has been hired as president of Marvel International – a newly created entity set up to develop the company's overall presence, business operations and profile in key international markets.

Maglione is to be based in London. For the last five years he has been managing director and senior vice president of Universal Studios Consumer Products Europe & MEA.

CHRIS Eliopoulous is bringing his black and white humour strip about two lovable losers back to Image.

The cartoonist began *Desperate Times* as a back up in **Savage Dragon** in 1997. He is set to relaunch the property as a standalone $2.95 series in January, kicking off with an issue #0.

Eliopoulous has previously released a **Desperate Times** four-parter through Image in 1998. He also self-published four issues of the title through his ARRRGH! Comics in 2000.

VERTIGO is to make **Swamp Thing: Bad Seed** ongoing. After Andy Diggle's originally announced four issues drawn by Enrique Breccia, Will Pfeiffer is to take over as series writer.

DANIEL Schaffer is offering a behind-the-scenes look at the saga of Violet Grimm, his arcane enchantress, in a 48-page Sirius one-shot.

Shipping in February, the black and white **Dogwitch Special Features: The Sketchbook** is priced $3.95. It contains deleted scenes, character design sketches and other unpublished material.

Also to be released in February is Schaffer's 144-page **Dogwitch: Direct to Video** trade paperback.

Priced $14.95, it collects issues #1-6 of the black and white comic.

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X-Men screenwriter set to propel Moore and Gibbons' magnum opus screenward

Mike Conroy's Frame to Frame

Charting the latest news between films and comics

FOR SOME fans it has been the Holy Grail of comicbook movies while others have been filled with dread at the very thought that some Philistine of a film director will try to bring Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' **Watchmen** to the screen. These people hold the 1986 12-parter in such high regard that they consider the idea of it being adapted to another medium to be sacrilegious.

But that hasn't stopped people trying. In 1989, Terry Gilliam teamed up with *Batman* scripter Sam Hamm for an abortive attempt, which saw the brilliant *Brazil* and *The Fisher King* director baulk at the immensity of the task he had undertaken. He concluded that he would need something like 12 hours to do justice to the source material.

"That was a really difficult one, because I thought it was such a wonderful book, and I didn't see how we could condense it and not destroy it at the same time. I was never totally comfortable with the project: I really thought it should have been a five-part miniseries for television, and then you would have had the time to develop the characters as they developed in the book," Gilliam commented when he subsequently abandoned his plans.

Changing climate

As *X-Men* and *X2* writer David Hayter explained, "People have had trouble bringing this project to life over the last 16 years. It was considered too dark, too complex, too 'smart.' But the world has changed. I think that the new global climate has finally caught up with the vision that Alan Moore had in 1986. It is the perfect time to make this movie."

But Hayter would say that. He's got a vested interest as the man Hollywood is looking to to pull off what many consider impossible. And you've got to admire the guy's guts... He's not only scripting *Watchmen*, he's making his directorial debut on the massive undertaking as well.

Judging by the synopsis for the Universal Pictures feature – which is being produced by *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*'s Lawrence Gordon – Hayter seems to have dropped the parallels highlighted throughout the DC series by Moore's use of extracts from the pirate comicbook.

He's probably right to do so. There's only so much that can be packed into a two – or even three - hour movie and the plot's complex enough as it is.

Apart from that it looks as though Hayter has been fairly faithful to the original and *Frame to Frame* hears that Moore is impressed by his script.

Different levels

And the writer appears equally taken with Moore and Gibbons' magnum opus which, he says, "presents one of the most brilliantly plotted, exciting and original stories to ever grace the pages of a comicbook, novel or any other genre. It is my goal to realise that on film."

He added that his "primary hope is to retain the relationships between what is being said and the images presented. In the graphic novel, everything you see and hear is interconnected on many, many different levels; I think this will translate very well to film. Like the book, people should be able to watch the film six

Above: Werewolf by Night by Don Perlin. Bottom left: Wonder Woman by Brian Bolland. Top left: A Dave Gibbons plate from 1988's **Watchmen Portfolio**. *Also, check out the CI contents page for an amusing potential cast picture for the* Watchmen *movie.*

or seven times and get something different from it each time."

Hayter also says that just as director Bryan Singer and his crew "tried to make the characters in *X-Men* real and show that their superpowers were a curse as much as a gift, **Watchmen** has a very high and intense level of character development. The series deconstructed the superhero mystique and took a literate look at the comicbook genre.

"It goes way beyond the standard hero and villain stuff and has the makings of a richly developed mystery," Hayter added.

He can sure talk the talk. There's going to be a *lot* of people hoping he can also walk the walk.

Watchmen is still a long way from hitting cinemas but it certainly seems to be moving in the right direction.

Tooth Fairy

Turning to more mundane movies, *Werewolf by Night* has got a director in John Fasano.

Unfortunately, he's the guy responsible for the truly-wretched *Darkness Falls* – which was based on *The Tooth Fairy*, a short film by **Bishop: The Last X-Man** writer Joseph Harris. Things are not looking too good.

Describing the project, which is written by *Chocolat*'s Robert Nelson Jacobs, Marvel Studios head Avi Arad said it's "*Sufferance*" with "less Verdi... done in a unique way." Which makes everything clear.

Also seeing the project described as a fantasy/romance that's somewhere between a family movie and an R-rated film makes *F2F* wonder where they're going with it.

Development hell

Another Marvel project, *Iron Man*, is also on the move.

Smallville writers Miles Millar and Alfred Gough are working on a second draft of their screenplay, which Marvel Studios producer Kevin Feige describes as "more like a Tom Clancy or James Bond movie than anything we've ever done."

With *Iron Man* lined up for a 2005 release by New Line, shooting is due to start early next year.

Meanwhile *Wonder Woman* is all over the place at Warner Bros, which seems unable to get any cinematic projects featuring DC's icons out of development hell.

"I'm doing *Wonder Woman* now and I have been tortured on how to do it in a fresh, unique way. I knew what was there in *Revolutions*, I knew what we had done – and yes, she flies on air currents, but how do you deal with that?" commented *The Matrix* producer Joel Silver, who now has *Birds of Prey*'s Laeta Kalogridis working on the screenplay.

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No more from Moore?

Novel Graphics by Paul Gravett

Highlighting the latest and best in graphic novels

DID you bake a cake? Did you drink a toast? Tuesday 18th November, 2003 was Alan Moore's 50th birthday.

For some time now Alan has announced that this date would mark his retirement from writing mainstream comics, but it was not to be, at least not yet. Moore's freedom has been postponed by six months, as he estimates it, because he still has to wrap up all of his America's Best Comics commitments. And you'll have noticed he refers only to leaving mainstream comics. That leaves him with plenty of scope for more independent and personal works still to come, like next year's **Lost Girls**.

> **"When things start getting too successful, it's time to tear them down and start all over again"**

In the meantime, his Golden Jubilee year has brought a plethora of projects, old and new, into print.

So yes, I did drink a toast of fine Belgian beer to Alan, because on that Tuesday, by pure coincidence, I was meeting the organisers of the first large-scale art gallery retrospective of Alan Moore's comics. As curator, I was in Charleroi, a city near Brussels which not only hosts one of Belgium's best comics festivals, but is also home to publishers Dupuis, a giant in Franco-Belgian bande dessinée. It is quite natural for a European city like this to embrace comics and its prestigious exhibition venue, the Palais des Beaux Arts, will dedicate one of its main galleries, some 5,000 square feet, to this Moore celebration from Valentine's Day next year till April 4th.

There have been some Moore exhibits in the past; I helped stage one back in the Nineties for Italy's Treviso Comics festival. This time last year, as part of their festival, I visited an impressive display of originals by many of Moore's cohorts in the basement gallery at Portugal's National Comics Centre or CNBDI in Amadora *(www.cm-amadora.pt)*.

Co-curators Pedro Mota and comics writer/artist Rick Veitch had rounded up 150 mouth-watering pieces for *Argumentos*. Their exhibition catalogue (ISBN 972-8284-27-6) is not only valuable for Mota's insightful overview but also for an an afterword by Veitch, though I would have liked a few reproductions of the original art or scripts shown, a bit of a missed opportunity.

Thanks to the CNBDI and to Mota and Veitch, a proportion of that selection will be reprised for this new, expanded exhibition. But additional pages will also be needed to convey the full sweep of more than two decades of Moore's overflowing imagination.

If any artists or collectors reading this would consider lending originals, please contact me *(paul.gravett@btopenworld.com)*. Rest assured that this respected art institution will handle works with utmost care and cover all transport and insurance costs. I'd also love to bring this exhibit to the UK next spring, but if this does not work out, why not take a cheap flight from London to Charleroi or go there on a day trip via Brussels by Eurostar? It's going to be unmissable.

Given this chance to look back over more than two decades, it's hard to

exaggerate the visionary force Alan has exerted on the medium. This comes across in the respect, affection and humour which fill the pages of two essential anthologies which appeared this summer.

George Khoury compiled **The Extraordinary Works of Alan Moore** *(www.twomorrows.com)*, interweaving an extensive interview with rarities like unused scripts and short but revealing strips about the writer from the likes of Gibbons, Bolland and Gaiman & Buckingham. Moore's captions on his childhood photos alone are worth the price of admission.

The other tome, co-edited and published by Gary Spencer Millidge of Strangehaven fame *(www.millidge.com)*, tops 350 pages and has 145 international contributors with all profits to Alzheimer's charities.

Alan Moore: Portrait of an Extraordinary Gentleman is a feast, from Gary's concise 12-page 'biographic' of Moore's life to meaty texts and varied illos and comics. Very tall and hairy, dressed in black, Moore may never be seen again at a festival, but he has become an iconic comics character in his own right.

Above: Alan Moore, "an iconic comics character in his own right".

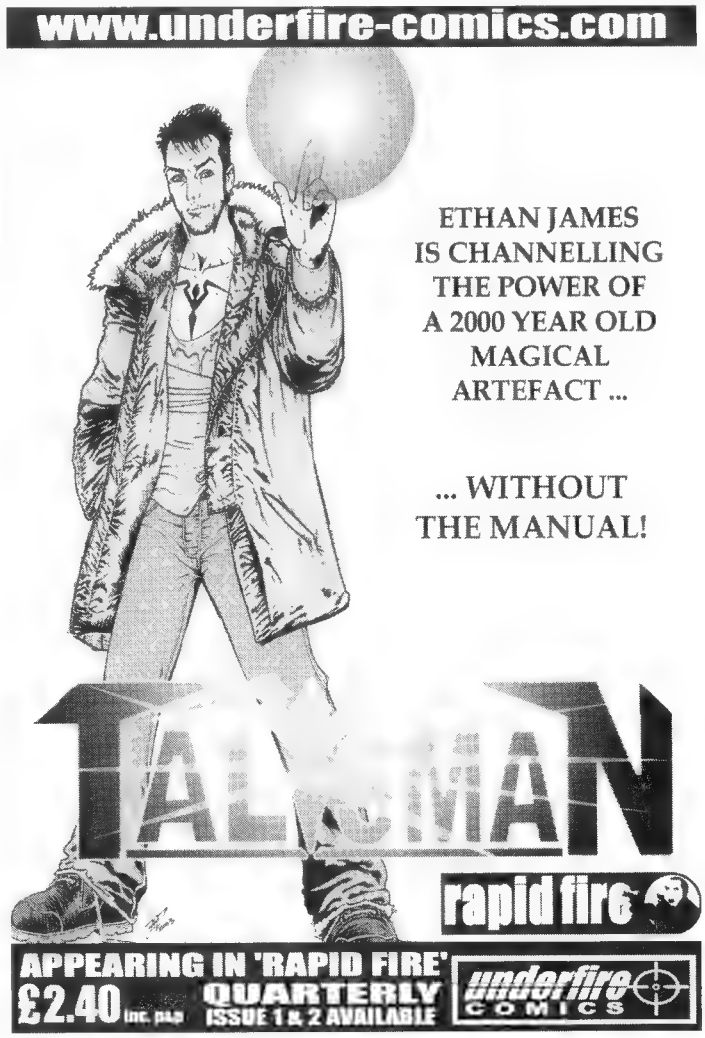
In addition to the ABC series, relics and out-of-print gems are being resurrected. The haunting masterpiece **A Small Killing** returns from Avatar with improved colour overseen by collaborator Oscar Zarate. Avatar's Yuggoth Cultures presents, some twenty years later, the first and only episode of Nightjar, intended for Dez Skinn's **Warrior** but never completed or published. Co-creator Bryan Talbot found his unfinished art and Alan's script and set about finishing them. It provides a tantalising glimpse of what might have been Alan's first modern horror series. Once he found his 'ideal horror vehicle' in **Swamp Thing**, however, as Bryan explains, Alan 'felt that he'd moved on and was capable of better work, and he was right. He just carried on getting better.'

While we await the complete Miracleman volume, and a reissue please of **The Bojeffries Saga**, at least Checker Books has packaged **Supreme**, an homage to Weisinger's Superman, into two volumes. Sadly the repro shot from the printed pages is fuzzy, so I'm keeping the comic books.

Another comics gatherum, **Across the Universe**, groups Moore's stray interpretations of DC heroes and villains and proves how he could unlock magic in the least likely material. He has had his fallings out with DC and others, including their absurd ban on a Cobweb tale. Luckily, this appeared, very thinly disguised, in the latest bumper **Top Shelf** anthology *(www.topshelfcomix.com)*. Their other Moore books are a ravishing re-imagining by José Villarrubia of **The Mirror of Love** and a new edition of his novel, **Voice of the Fire**.

A man of principle, Moore has left mainstream comics before, but for the first time he can do it on his own terms. As he told me, "When things start getting too successful, it's time to tear them down and start all over again".

Like a destroyer of worlds, like the goddess Shiva, Alan Moore is now charting the XYZ of his ABC universe. And, as always in his continuous creative cycle, the death card he is playing will also signify renewal and rebirth.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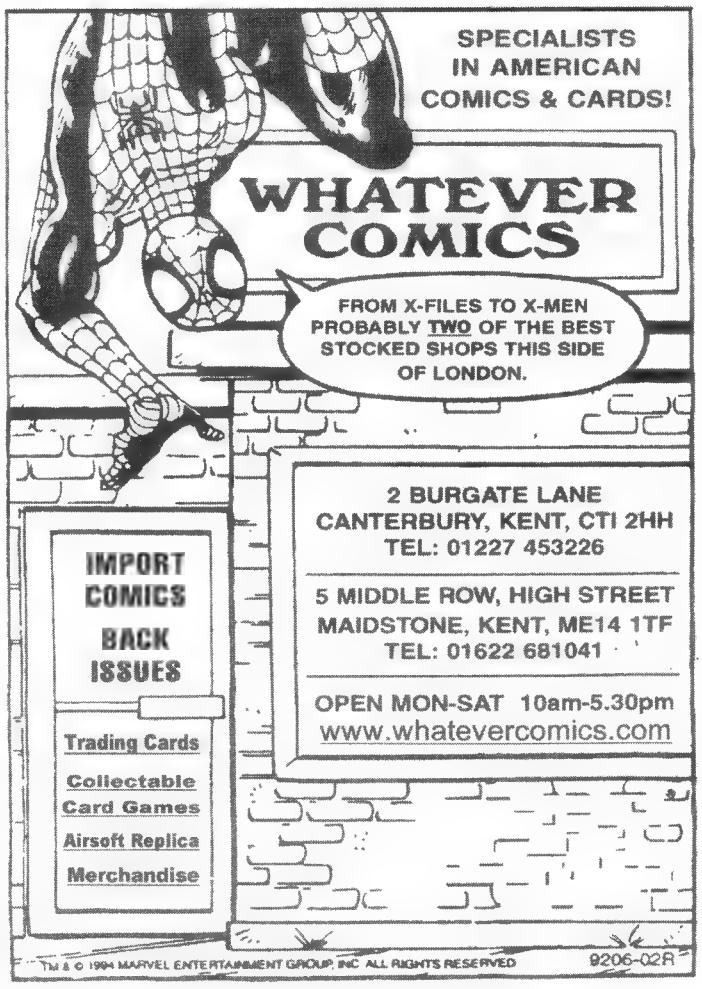
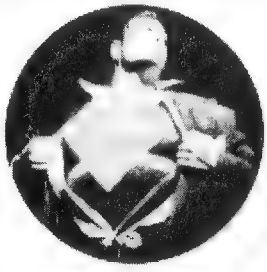
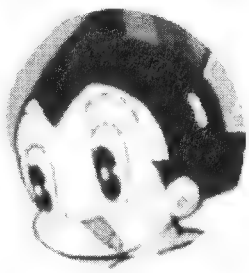
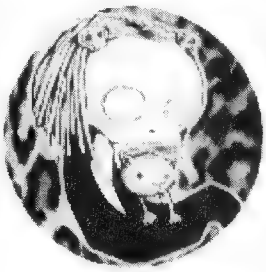
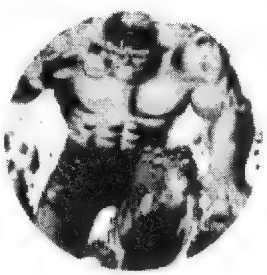






PUSH ALL THE BUTTONS





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Customer orders vs retailer chaos

Talking Shop with Stephen Holland

Reminding people there's a real mainstream out there

AT THE core of any thriving comic shop sits a healthy, regularly updated and meticulously monitored customer order file.

Sorry, there aren't going to be many jokes this month. Dez rightly sets a firm limit on the space I'm allowed each issue, otherwise I can assure you I'd be breaking into Mike Conroy's **Frames**, casting shadows over Biff's **Illuminations** and kicking Rich Johnston even further into his **Gutter**. Is this even possible, Rich? How much room do you actually have left for manoeuvre down there?

The point is, I need to crack on and not waste a single sentence on irrelevant badinage (not even to point out hastily that Rich and I are very old friends).

So why should customer orders be at the centre of everything we do?

Is it because they're an excellent gauge of demand? Yes. Is it because the primary form this medium takes is a regularly recurring dose of episodic soap-opera which few of its readers wish to miss a chunk of? Yes. Is it a way of securing additional income from titles we might not have space to stock on the shelves? Yes.

But more than anything, it is because whatever a shop decides to sell on its shelves, whether it's 2,000 different trade paperbacks, 300 WWE action figures or a coliseum full of Yu-Gi-Oh! cards, if someone has entrusted us to supply them with material they definitely want, and are prepared to collect then pay for, not only are we honour-bound to fulfill this obligation, but from a business point of view it's a virtually solid sale with the prospect of continued custom.

It's a low-risk, low-management, loyalty engendering system inherently geared towards repeat custom. And repeat custom is any shop's pot of gold.

I didn't say no risk, because the retailer has to trust the person to come in and cough up the cash for their order, but then the customer has to trust the retailer to fulfill their part of the bargain and do what they're bloody well told.

And with the right system, it isn't that difficult. With the right system, not only can a shop fulfill all its regular customer orders, it can make completing the monthly order form so much easier.

When Mark first hired me to work for Fantastic Store 12 years ago (no, I'm not putting that travesty of a failed chain in bold type, but I will put it in *Pitfalls*, the sporadic feature in **CI** for unbelievable fuck-ups, if you fancy), I inherited a small book of some thirty customers, arranged by name. So I knew that individual X wanted titles F, R and T.

But, at a glance, I didn't know how many customers wanted title F, so I didn't know how many of title F to order, nor how many of title F to put aside once they arrived, and I had to go through every person's list each time and see what they wanted and try to remember if those titles had come in and where in that small pile they were.

> Customer orders... are geared towards repeat custom. And repeat custom is any shop's pot of gold.

Talk about labour-intensive! Imagine having to do that with 700 different customers on over 1,000 different titles. Instead we have an alphabetical list of titles, with those customers who want each issue next to it. Dotted amongst those are one-off requests, whether made in advance of publication or afterwards.

My first step towards this was one of those quaint index card boxes, but before we opened Page 45 (which Dez won't put in bold either, because he says this is a big enough free ad anyway) I dived into computer technology and discovered the joys of the database (okay, joy's a bit strong – *flexibility*, let's say), which allows me to update the handwritten notes periodically and print the orders out afresh, along with instant reports on any individual's order, should they ask. The revolution has been remarkable.

Each time the title is solicited, all I have to do is count the number of customer orders, make sure we order *at least* that many for those listed, then add however many we want for the shelves.

Moreover, if the number on our books go up between the order form and arrival, I can adjust upwards. Even the most lackadaisical retailer is given two major hints to do that.

1) Remember (**CI** #165): the order form appears two months in advance of publication. So when I come to look at the next month's order form, I look back over the last three months' orders to make sure I'm being consistent and adjust the new month's orders according to demand. At the same time I'm also checking customer orders to make sure not only that I'm ordering enough this month, but did so over the last two. If they've gone up, I can simply order some more.

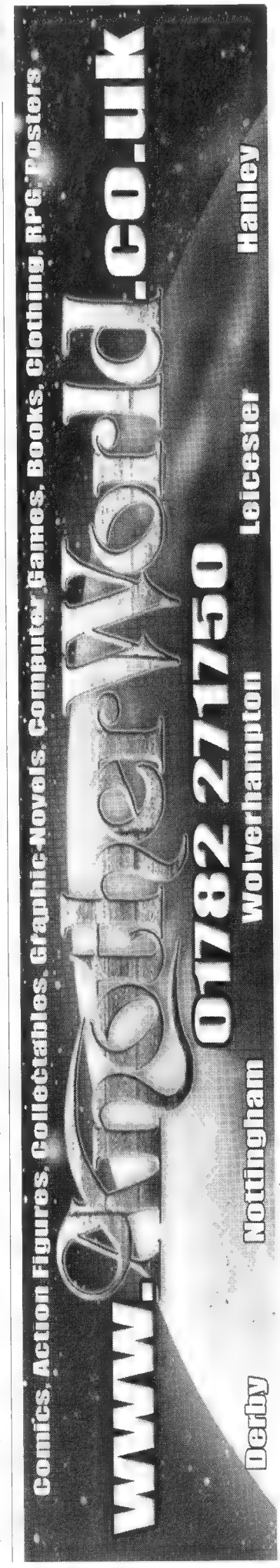
2) About two weeks before publication, Diamond sends a list of all titles due to arrive. Perfect! A last-minute reminder to check all those titles against the numbers required, and advance reorder accordingly.

When the comics arrive, this system also proves invaluable. We count the copies we need to save, put them all to one side while we bag, tape, price the rest for the shelves, then return to file away each title for whoever is listed. We know we pulled exactly the right number of copies, so if there's one left over, I'll go right down the names again until I find out who I missed out. It's a right pain when **League of Extraordinary Gentlemen** appears and I find I've a missed one out of 150 customers (usually the middle of six Johnsons), but a second sweep will at least sort out any shortcomings. (And, on a "Buck Stopping Here" note, customer orders does happen to be my responsibility; in the unlikely event that such thoroughness hasn't paid off, it is entirely my fault. Sorry.)

Now, if I have bored you all into a coma with the above, it is only to impress upon you that this is all entirely feasible, reasonably basic, and there can be few excuses for a no-show if you've reserved something in advance – whoever it is you're shopping with.

Oh, and the other reason why there were no jokes? I couldn't think of any. Other than Fantastic Store.

Stephen Holland runs Nottingham's Page 45 with Mark Simpson and Tom Rosin.



Advance Listings

READERS: You can use this Advance Listings *section as an order form with your direct market store or mail order supplier. Simply mark the items you require, copy or remove these pages (or list them on a separate piece of paper) and give it to your supplier, together with a note of your name, address and phone number to guarantee not missing any of the new titles being published. Certain suppliers may not accept standing orders, so check with them first. All prices of US titles listed are in dollars. Import prices are usually converted at a rate of $1.00 = 85p UK sterling. Shipping dates given are the earliest date product will reach stores. All dates, prices and information are assumed to be accurate as provided by publishers.*

Compiled by Jim Hannah

The following are 32 page colour titles unless stated

ON SALE FROM

JAN 7

Dark Horse

The Invincible Ed: The End? 4 (Ryan Woodward) Our friend Ed finally sees his potential that Nod, now slain by Lance Lundgin, had been trying to teach him. $2.99

one-shot **Love Me Tender-loin: A Cal McDonald Mystery** (Steve Niles & Ben Templesmith) When a bizarre string of strangulation murders hits the streets of Los Angeles, and the bodies are found covered in blood, it seems like a madman is on the loose. $2.99

Megatokyo Vol 2 (Fred Gallagher & Rodney Caston; tpbk) Whether entangled in a fantasy gaming scenario, saving Tokyo from devastation by rampaging zombies, or taking timid steps towards love, swirling with youthful awkwardness, here you can experience Tokyo through many unique – and drastically different points of view. 176pg b&w $9.95

Star Wars: Empire 17 *(To the Last Man* 2 of 3; Welles Hartley & Davide Fabbri + Christian Dalla Vecchia) Sunber's infantry regiment on the jungle world of Maridun is cut off from the rest of the Empire. $2.99

Trigun Vol 2 (Yasuhiro Nightow) Set in some kind of post-apocalypse western future, Trigun continues to knit a goofy yet mysterious story about a nice-guy gunslinger with a dangerous past and a huge bounty on his head. Mature readers. 344pg b&w $14.95

DC Comics

The Authority 9 (Robbie Morrison & Dwayne Turner + Sal Regla; *WildStorm)* The Authority enters an apocalyptic battle with John Clay and the Church of Transcendence. Things will never be the same, as our heroes are forced to make the most difficult decisions they've ever faced. $2.95

Batman: City of Light 4 (The Pander Brothers + Mark Paniccia & Pander Bros + Alvaro Lopez) What effects will Batman's psychological battle have on Gotham City and on his allies? . $2.95

Detective Comics 790 (Andersen Gabrych + A.J. Lieberman & various) As Batgirl and Batman descend on Gotham to break up a murderous drug ring, will the two most tight-lipped heroes in the DCU form a bond? $2.75

one-shot **Elfquest: The Grand Quest** Vol 1 (Richard Pini + Wendy Pini & Wendy Pini) Telling the story that first introduced Cutter, Skywise, Leetah, Rayek, and the other elves, trolls, wolves, and humans. 224pg b&w $9.95

JSA 56 *(Black Reign* 1 of 6; Geoff Johns & Don Kramer + Keith Champagne) It has been too long since the people of Kahndaq, the birthplace of Black Adam, have tasted freedom and justice. That's all about to end, though, as Black Adam leads Atom Smasher, Northwynd, Brainwave, and others behind enemy lines. $2.50

Justice League Adventures 27 (Josh Siegel & Chris Jones + Dan Davis) Hawkgirl and Green Lantern take a group of inexperienced teenage heroes under their wing. Do they have what it takes to save the world? $2.25

Looney Tunes 110 (various) Booted from his job in the sewers of Paris, Pepe LePew goes job-hunting $2.25

one-shot **Lucifer: Inferno** (Mike Carey & various; *Vertigo)* Lucifer Morningstar returns to Hell in this fifth collection of the Lucifer series, reprinting issues #29-35. 168pg $14.95

new **My Faith in Frankie** 1 (of 4; Mike Carey & Sonny Liew + Marc Hempel; *Vertigo)* Since she was a baby, Frankie has been protected and aided by the deity Jeriven. Now she's trying to spice up her love life, and she doesn't need Jeriven's constant supervision, so she kicks him to the curb. But Jeriven isn't about to lose his sole disciple lying down... ..... $2.95

Plastic Man 2 (Kyle Baker & Baker) Plas gets a new partner – a gorgeous FBI agent who regards him with suspicion. $2.95

new **Robotech: Invasion** 1 (of 5; Jay Faerber + Ken Siu-Chong & Takeshi Miyazawa + Omar Dogan; *WildStorm)* Robotech's New Generation launches into action as a large-scale war erupts against the Invid. $2.95

Superman: Birthright 6 (Mark Waid & Leinil Yu + Gerry Alanguilan) Lex Luthor's first meeting with Clark Kent. What's the connection between the two that has roots in Smallville? Does the master of Metropolis know more about this new hero Superman than anyone else? $2.95

one-shot **Superman: Red Son** (Mark Millar & various; *Elseworlds)* Collecting the three issue miniseries. The ship carrying the infant Superman lands in the midst of the Cold War-era Soviet Union in the 1950s. 160pg $17.95

one-shot **Vamps** (Elaine Lee & William Simpson; *Vertigo)* Reprints the original six issue miniseries, telling the tale of the Vamps' struggle to free themselves from their male vampire master. 160pg $9.95

Y: The Last Man 18 *(Safeword* 1 of 3, Brian K. Vaughan & Pia Guerra + José Marzan Jr) The last man on earth and his companions travel to Colorado, hoping to find medical attention for ailing pet monkey Ampersand. $2.95

Marvel

Avengers 77 *(Lionheart of Avalon* 1; Chuck Austen & Olivier Coipel) It seems like a routine mission when Captain America and Earth's Mightiest Heroes head to Great Britain to deal with the Wrecking Crew's latest scheme. But when things get out of hand, it takes the bravery of an innocent bystander using Cap's indestructible shield to save them all. $2.99

Elektra 31 *(Prophet & Loss* 3 of 3; Robert Rodi & Will Conrad) Can Elektra fulfil her contract even though her mark is an eight-year-old boy? $2.99

Elektra Vol 3: Relentless (Robert Rodi & Sean Chen; tpbk) Experience the life of Elektra, the stunning killer-for-hire, from two unique perspectives – through the eyes of the assassin herself, and through the eyes of her latest mark. Collects Elektra #23-28. 144pg $14.95

Exiles 40 *(King Hyperion* 3 of 3; Chuck Austen & Jim Calafiore) The story arc shining the spotlight on the Weapon X squad of Exiles comes to an Earth-shattering conclusion – literally $2.99

one-shot **Lex Talionis: A Jungle Tale** (Aneruin Wright; tpbk) Jungle action and a tale of vengeance are combined in this tale of metaphysical justice. $5.95

Marvel Masterworks: The Uncanny X-Men Vol 2 (Chris Claremont & Dave Cockrum + John Byrne; hbk) Ever expanding their ranks, the Children of the Atom combat the evils threatening both mutants and humans. Collects X-Men Vol 1 #101-121. 192pg $39.99

New X-Men 151 (Grant Morrison & Marc Silvestri) Take a look into the X-Men's future. Society has crumbled, the human race is all but decimated, and mutants have evolved far beyond their imagined potential. $2.25

Sentinel 11 *(Awakening* 2 of 3; Sean McKeever & UDON) If it wasn't enough for Juston to have a family member in the hospital and the authorities breathing down his neck, now he has to contend with a 30 foot robot that's become aware of its true purpose – to hunt and kill mutants. $2.99

Spider-Girl 68 (Tom DeFalco & Ron Frenz) A stand-alone story features the return of an old supervillain. Spider-Girl notices one of her friends is headed for disaster. Will her efforts to rein him in prove successful or destroy them both? $2.99

Spider-Man & Doctor Octopus: Negative Exposure 4 (of 5; Brian K. Vaughan & Staz Johnson) Will Doc Ock be successful in his brutal manipulation of naïve cameraman Jeff Brasi – Peter Parker's main rival at the Bugle – or will the plan blow up in his face? $2.99

new **Spider-Man Unlimited** 1 (Joseph Goodrich + Brian Lynch & Takeshi Miyazawa + Sean Chen) New bimonthly series. Spider-Man faces off against an old villain, Slyde, who's got himself a ridiculous villain makeover. $2.99

Supreme Power 6 (J. Michael Straczynski & Gary Frank; *MAX Comics)* Featuring the historic first meeting between the two deadliest men on the planet – Hyperion and Nighthawk. $2.99

Thanos 4 *(Epiphany* 4 of 6; Jim Starlin) Galactus sends his Punishers after Thanos and Warlock. The battle between the cosmic titans gets serious. .. $2.99

Ultimate Spider-Man 52 *(Claws* 3 of 4; Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley) It's an Ultimate Cat fight when Black Cat and Elektra face off, with Spider-Man caught in the middle. $2.25

Uncanny X-Men 437 (She *Lies with Angels* 1 of 5; Chuck Austen & Salvador Larroca) A special tale of the heart revolves around two young star-crossed lovers, caught between the forces of their families' opposing views on the human/mutant race situation. ... $2.25

ON SALE FROM

JAN 14

Dark Horse

Berserk Vol 2: The Guardians of Desire (Kentaåro Miura) The evil Count uses his dark powers to transform a defeated guard captain into an inhuman horror to combat Guts, the Black Swordsman. Mature. 240pg b&w $12.95

Blade of the Immortal 85 *(Mirror of the Soul* 2; Hiroaki Samura) When they fought in the *Dreamsong* storyline, Makie Otono-Tachibana, as swordswoman of the Itto-ryu left our near-immortal hero lying helpless in bloody dirt. Now, Anotsu finds her in a small town as he flees Kaga, and she's a rundown husk of the warrior she once was. $2.99

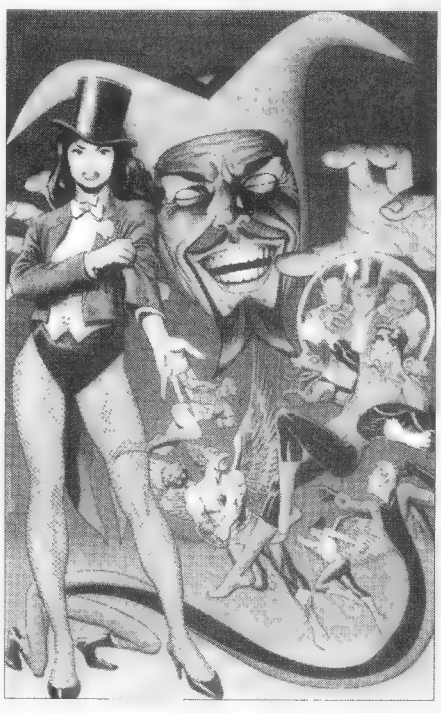
Star Wars: Infinities – Return of the Jedi 3 (Adam Gallardo, Ryan Benjamin and Saleen Crawford) Han is rescued, but Luke has been captured, and Leia's determination to free him has led to a precipitous and premature attack on the Death Star. $2.99

Tales of the Vampires 2 (various) Joss Whedon, the creator of Buffy the Vampire Slayer reunites with Brett Matthews and Jane Espenson, as they continue this look at the lives of vampires in the world of Buffy and the Slayers. $2.99

DC Comics

Aquaman 14 (John Ostrander & Tom Grummett + Wade von Grawbadger) Who is the mysterious Octo-Man? What is the truth about an alleged deep-sea tryst? $2.50

Batgirl 48 (Dylan Horrocks & Jean-Jacques Dzialowski + Drew Geraci) Batgirl's relationship with Batman continues to fray as she proceeds against



close-up

JLA: Zatanna's Search

DC Comics

Writers: Gardner Fox + Gerry Conway

Artists: various

The Silver Age saga that introduces Zatanna. The teenage mage seeks help from the JLA to rescue her father, Golden Age great Zatara, from certain doom. Reprinted from The Atom #19, Hawkman #4, Green Lantern #42, Detective Comics #335 and #355 and Justice League of America #51. 128pg $12.95

ON SALE JANUARY 14

orders in an investigation to find a missing girl. $2.50

Batman: Death and the Maidens 6 (Greg Rucka & Klaus Janson) Bruce Wayne takes a discomforting walk down memory lane, discovering things about himself he never dared acknowledge before. $2.95

Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 175 *(Testament* 4 of 5; John Wagner & Chris Brunner) Rough Justice want money and they've targeted Bruce Wayne, the wealthiest man in Gotham. $2.50

The Demon: Driven Out 5 (Joshua Dysart & Pop Mhan + Art Thibert) Jason Blood and the angry young Ame Okumura join forces against the explosive glee of Etrigan. $2.50

Fables 21 (Bill Willingham & Mark Buckingham + Steve Leialoha; *Vertigo)* When the going gets tough, Fables go drinking. $2.50

Fallen Angel 7 (Peter David & David Lopez + Fernando Blanco) Black Mariah's back in town, and she's hunting for the Angel. But the Angel fell from grace a long time ago, so when Mariah thinks she can bend Lee to her will, she finds out the hard way that she couldn't be more mistaken. $2.50

ONE SHOT Global Frequency: Planet Ablaze (Warren Ellis & various; *WildStorm)* Collecting issues #1-6. Miranda Zero, the mysterious leader/benefactor/recruiter of Global Frequency is a woman with a mission. She saves people. She and 1,000 others make up the most diverse team of specialists the planet has ever seen. 144pg $14.95

Gotham Central 15 (Ed Brubaker + Greg Rucka & Michael Lark + Stefano Gaudiano) The Joker is in custody. Is this just another part of his game with Batman, with the detectives of the GCPD caught in the middle? $2.50

Green Arrow 34 *(City Walls* 1 of 5; Judd Winick & Phil Hester and Ande Parks) Green Arrow and Black Canary investigate a rash of robberies in Star City... $2.50

Hawkman 23 (Geoff Johns & Rags Morales + Michael Bair) The JSA have taken some time off, spending the weekend in St Roch for Mardi Gras. But not everyone is enjoying the trip, especially Hourman. $2.50

H-E-R-O 12 *(Ch-Ch-Ch-Changes* 1 of 3; Will Pfeifer & Kano) Tough guy Joe Hamill thought it would be great to use the H-E-R-O device, but he got more than he bargained for. Now he's been transformed into Electro Lass, and, having lost the mystical dial, he has no way to transform back into his manly self. $2.50

one-shot **JLA: Zatanna's Search** (Gardner Fox + Gerry Conway & various) *See Close-Up, on previous page.*

Nightwing 89 (Devin Grayson & Patrick Zircher + Andy Owens) A turning point in the life of Dick Grayson. $2.25

one-shot **Outsiders: Looking For Trouble** (Judd Winick & various) Reprinting Outsiders #1-6 and the lead story from Teen Titans/Outsiders Secret Files #1. The Outsiders take on Gorilla Grodd and his ferocious monkey army. 192pg $12.95

Stormwatch: Team Achilles 19 (Micah Ian Wright & C.P. Smith + Eric Nguyen; *WildStorm)* Team Achilles has the wounded Citizen Soldier cornered and aims to capture him, but the government wants him dead. $2.95

new **Superman: Secret Identity** 1 (Kurt Busiek & Stuart Immonen) You're young, living in Kansas, and you want to be a writer. Your last name is Kent, and your parents make the mistake of naming you Clark. Then one day, you discover that you can fly. $5.95

Superman Titles Action Comics 811 (Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Karl Kerschl) Superman is missing after the events of Superman 200, and now Metropolis is facing a new crisis without the help of its champion. $2.25

Teen Titans 7 (Geoff Johns & Tom Grummett + Nelson DeCastro) The Titans are weekend warriors, but what do they do on a Wednesday? $2.50

Thundercats: Hammerhand's Revenge 4 (Fiona Avery & Carlos D'Anda; *WildStorm)* Lion-O has forged an alliance between the Griffins and the Thundercats against the evil Hammerhand and his Beserkers – now it's an all-out battle between 'Cats and Pirates. $2.95

Marvel

Captain America 22 (Robert Morales & Chris Bachalo) After an unfortunate incident among New York's art crowd, Cap meets his fellow judges for a military tribunal in Guantanamo Bay – and is confronted by a shocking mystery. $2.99

Captain America Vol 4: Captain America Lives Again (Dave Gibbons & Lee Weeks; tpbk) Captain America finds himself in a nightmare New York City renamed New Berlin, following the Nazis victory in WWII. Collects Captain America #17-20 and Tales of Suspense #66. 112pg $12.99

Captain Marvel 18 *(Crazy Like a Fox* 4 of 4; Peter David & Paul Azaceta) Marv's insanity has reached critical mass, and it's going to take the combined efforts of Rick Jones, Marv's mom, the Skrull, the Shi'ar, the Kree, and the new Captain Marvel herself to rein him in. $2.99

Daredevil 56 (Brian Michael Bendis & Alex Maleev) Wilson Fisk is gone and Daredevil has claimed the role of the new Kingpin of Hell's Kitchen. .. $2.99

new **Deathlok: Detour** 1 (of 4: Daniel Way & Darick Robertson; *MAX Comics)* In the barren land formerly known as the USA, crime is the norm, justice is for sale, and security is a fully loaded magnum. And that's the good news. Some genius just got the bright idea to resuscitate the killer cyborg known as Deathlok. $2.99

Emma Frost 7 *(Hellfire* 1 of 6; Karl Bollers & Carlo Pagulayan) Cut off from her family and its wealth for the first time in her life, young Emma Frost must make her way in the world alone! $2.50

Incredible Hulk 65 (Bruce Jones & Mike Deodato) High noon in the desert as Doc Samson and Sandra Verdugo converge on Home Base, where the Hulk has wreaked some serious havoc. $2.25

Inhumans 9 *(No Matter The Cost* 1 of 4; Sean McKeever & Dave Ross) A spoiled, boorish college guy is courting Nahrees, much to her dismay... $2.99

Iron Man 7#6 *(The Best Defense* 4 of 6; John Jackson Miller & Jorge Lucas) With confirmation his only chance to stop a dangerous rogue Pentagon operation, Tony Stark fights his past to save the future – in combat with the United States Senate. $2.99

Marvel 1602 #6 (of 8; Neil Gaiman & Andy Kubert + Richard Isanove) Doctor Strange goes to the moon, while the heroes take on Doom and his Vulture squadron. $3.50

one-shot **Marvel Masterworks: The Sub-Mariner** Vol 1 (Stan Lee + Gene Colan & Wallace Wood + Bill Everett) Namor in all his bitter, arrogant glory, fighting underwater threats and surface-dwellers alike. Collects Marvel Comics #1, Daredevil Vol 1 #7, Tales To Astonish #70-87. 272pg $49.99

Nyx 4 (Joe Quesada & Joshua Middleton) With a penchant for picking up strays, newcomer Tatiana picks up more than she bargained for when she manifests a striking mutant ability and catches the attention of Kiden's wayward gang. $2.99

Punisher Vol 3 (Garth Ennis & Steve Dillon + Tom Mandrake; hbk) The Punisher has to deal with corruption in the police force. Collects The Punisher #19-27. ..... $24.99

Punisher Max 1 *(In the Beginning* 1; Garth Ennis & Lewis LaRosa; *MAX Comics)* One of comics' most provocative writers takes one of comics' most provocative characters in a new direction. $2.99

Spectacular Spider-Man 9 *(Countdown* 4 of 5; Paul Jenkins & Humberto Ramos) It's High Noon in Times Square as a defeated Spider-Man confronts Doc Ock, with countless innocent lives hanging in the balance. $2.25

Thor 73 *(The Reigning* 5; Dan Jurgens & Scot Eaton) Worlds collide as revolt strikes Thor's perfect world of tomorrow – and one cast member gives up the ghost. $2.99

Ultimate Six 6 (Brian Michael Bendis & Trevor Hairsine) It's an all-out slugfest between the Ultimates and the Sinister Six on the White House lawn while Spider-Man faces an excruciating decision. $2.25

Ultimate X-Men 41 *(New Mutants* 2 of 5; Brian Michael Bendis & David Finch) A deadly new mutant with a horrifying power debuts, and only one of the X-Men has a chance of stopping the carnage. $2.25

Ultimate X-Men Vol 7: Blockbuster (Brian Michael Bendis & David Finch; tpbk) The X-Men, Spider-Man and Daredevil all team up to help Wolverine fight against a secret from his mysterious past. Collects Ultimate X-Men #34-39. 144pg $12.99

X-Treme X-Men 40 *(Bogan* 1 of 5; Chris Claremont & Igor Kordey) A mysterious telepath enters into the lives of the X-Men; an unknown assailant unexpectedly captures Bishop; Sage discovers a startling secret; plus the return of one of their most dangerous foes. $2.99

ON SALE FROM

JAN 21

Dark Horse

Al Capp's Li'l Abner: The Frazetta Sundays Volume 4 (1960-1961) (Frank Frazetta) Features two separate Fearless Fosdick adventures and collects the Sunday strips from the beginning of 1960 through to 1961. 120pg $18.95

Chosen 2 (Mark Millar and Peter Gross) Jodie Christianson has just discovered that he's the second coming of Jesus. So what does the returned savior do? Tests his powers of course! $2.99

The Collected Works of Tony Millionaire's Sock Monkey Vol 3 & 4 (Tony Millionaire; tpbk) Collects Tony Millionaire's latest four comicbooks, including the scandalous issue in which Uncle Gabby is so distraught over the accidental killing of a baby bird that he attempts suicide. 88pg b&w $12.95

new **Freaks of the Heartland** 1 (Steve Niles & Greg Ruth) Trevor Owen has a younger brother who lives in the barn behind the house, too monstrous to be let into the house. The boy's only six years old, but he towers over his older brother, and possesses monstrous strength. $2.99

one-shot **Hellboy Junior** (various) The most bizarre Hellboy spin-off is collected in

Illuminations

Highlights from January's releases

Selected by Martin "Biff" Averre

January 2004 is going to be a very lean month for new releases; neither of the big two is risking launching major new titles when most pockets are lean after the excesses of Christmas. More fool them. Quality will always sell itself and I for one need something to kick some interest into the month. So I need to put my thinking cap on and extol the virtues of current titles: highlight excellent work that may have slipped past people during the previous 11 months.

Let me begin with home-grown indie talent. Vince Danks and Roger Gibson have created in **Sapphire** an intriguing conspiracy/espionage secret service tale wrapped up in the mystical that evokes the original Avengers, Steed and Peel, not Pym and Stark. Their original series completed in 1998 and now available as a trade, continues in the anthology **Raven** which has reached #4 and at merely £1 an issue should be in every store's recommended section.

David Hitchcock produces some of the finest black and white pencils I have ever seen. His moody and evocative recreation of London in the 19th century, **Whitechapel Freak**, and then **Spring Heeled Jack** #1(of 3), sold better than the average DC and Marvel and outsold 90% of all Image and Dark Horse titles. **Spring Heeled Jack** #2 should be out soon in colour as Dave has found a UK publisher with enough faith to give his creations a fighting chance. Check either of the above, you'll not be disappointed. **Sales 4/5 Quality 5/5**

Who would have thought that DC would have three hits within a few months of each other? **Teen Titans** launched yet again and I gave it no chance at all. Could I have been more wrong? If it hadn't been for DC reprinting the early issues my customers and I would have missed out on an excellent comic. That was in July, and in June **Outsiders** debuted and Nightwing, Arsenal and crew didn't seem a likely hit. Once again the quality of the book took me by surprise and sales have grown as the series has progressed. Then in August came the big-hitter **Superman/Batman** #1, which I expected to do well. But the response from the fans has been incredible and resulted in a doubling of my expected sales. This has once again benefited from DC reprinting when demand is there. Without the first and second prints of #1, I would never have been able to sell as many of #2 and #3. Make January the time to highlight these three series. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

Marvel titles are generally strong, but the top group of all throughout 2003 has been the Ultimate line. **Ultimate Spider-Man** and **Ultimate X-Men** grew in sales each month, so much so that they now sell more than the originals. The **Ultimate Wars** and **Ultimate Six** miniseries sold out, despite me ordering on the heavy side. And lastly **The Ultimates** which, despite erratic scheduling, maintained consistently high sales. Next is the yet-to-be-seen **Ultimate Fantastic Four**. Put these with trades that collect all the sold-out issues and you have an excellent Marvel sales tool that proves you don't need new titles every month. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

CrossGen may be hitting choppy waters at the moment but it has been the bravest publisher of 2003. Steering well clear of spandex it has created a line of strong titles and if you overlooked **El Cazador**, **Brath**, **Sojourn** and **Ruse** then you have missed damn fine reads. Quality and bravery do not always garner sales in the comics world where Marvel and DC hold such a grip on the market and CrossGen has to prune its titles. My advice is to not sit back and say I knew they were doomed, but buy one of their titles and be entertained. Comics need variety and CrossGen gives just that. **Sales 2/5 Quality 5/5**

With 22 years of comic retail experience as Ace Comics, Biff has also produced his Illuminations monthly fanzine for 19 years before moving it to the web.

one volume, after four years out of print. Includes the outrageous Mignola-drawn tale Squid of Man and many others. 120pg $14.95

new **Iron Empires Volume 1: Faith Conquers** (Christopher Moeller) Faith Conquers, the first in the series of Iron Empires collections from Dark Horse, kicks off the release of the Iron Empires role-playing game and will be followed by a second trade paperback, Sheva's War, in April. 160pg $17.95

Lone 5 (Stuart Moore & Jerome Opena + John Wycough) The final confrontation between Lone, the zombie hoard and the strange being known only as The Gunfather that controls them. $2.99

Star Wars: Republic 61 (John Ostrander & Brandon Badeaux) While the Clone Wars continue to hold the attention of the galaxy, sinister plans are afoot within the Senate. $2.99

Star Wars Tales Vol 4 (various) Collects #13-16 the quarterly anthology, featuring Jedi Master Mace Windu, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Han Solo, and of course the big man himself – Darth Vader! 224pg $19 95

one-shot **Strip Search** (various; tpbk) More than a dozen young artists and writers strut their stuff in this hefty collection culled from Dark Horse's on-line comics talent search/contest, Strip Search. 128pg b&w $14.95

DC Comics

Adventures of Superman 624 (Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Karl Kerschl) Out of the raging storm that plagues Metropolis comes a new hero from another world, poised to take Superman's place in the DCU. . $2.25

Arrowsmith 6 (of 6; Kurt Busiek & Carlos Pacheco + Jesus Merino; *WildStorm)* Wounded, trapped behind enemy lines, and shaken to the core by what he's experienced, Fletcher Arrowsmith must guide his friends to safety, facing vampires and worse. $2.95

Batman Adventures 10 (Ty Templeton + Dan Slott & Rick Burchett + Terry Beatty) Misunderstood by the cops, Batman needs Catwoman's help to escape them. But if Catty thinks they can be fugitives together, she's wrong! $2.25

Batman: Gotham Knights 49 (Scott Beatty + Geoff Johns & various) Batman, Nightwing, Robin and Batgirl go toe-to-toe with the man who once broke Batman's back. $2 75

Birds of Prey 62 (Gail Simone & Ed Benes + Alex Lei) Lady Shiva makes Black Canary an offer that could change the course of her life. $2.50

new **DC: The New Frontier** 1 (Darwyn Cooke & Cooke) At the end of World War II, The Losers are sent on a perilous mission to recover The Suicide Squad. 64pg $6.95

Human Target 6 (Peter Milligan & Cliff Chiang) Chris Chance faces his faith – and lack of it – when danger strikes a church. $2.95

iCandy 5 (Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Kalman Andrasofszky) All the pieces of the puzzle start coming together, as the real motivations of Roland Childes – the owner of the video game company that created iCandy – are exposed. .. $2.50

JSA 57 *(Black Reign* 3 of 6; Geoff Johns & Don Kramer + Keith Champagne) The JSA prepare for war, but not everyone is thrilled with the decisions being made and the orders being given. $2.50

Justice League Adventures Vol 1: The Magnificent Seven (various) Collects Justice League Adventures #3, #6, and #10-12, featuring the stories *The Star Lost, Wolf's Clothing, Must There Be a Martian Manhunter?, The Moment,* and *Cold War.* 112pg $6.95

Justice League Adventures Vol 2: Friends and Foes (various; tpbk) Collecting Justice League Adventures #13-14, #16, and #19-20. 112pg . $6.95

Kamikaze 4 (various; *WildStorm)* Two FBI agents have been dispatched to the hospital where Andy is recovering from the accident, hoping for his help in stopping the Kamikaze-related deaths. $2.95

The Losers 8 *(Downtime* 1 of 2; Andy Diggle & Shawn Martinbrough; *Vertigo)* They're waging their own personal war against the CIA, but each of the Losers has their own reason for fighting. $2.95

Lucifer 46 *(Stitchglass Slide* 1 of 4; Mike Carey & Peter Gross + Ryan Kelly; *Vertigo)* After the rebellion of the Titans, Lucifer decides to evict every last immortal from his Creation. $2.50

one-shot **Nightwing: Big Guns** (Chuck Dixon & various) *See Close-Up, below.*

Outsiders 8 (Judd Winick & Tom Raney + Sean Parsons) A Russian mob paints the town red as they prepare to raise hell – literally. $2.50

The Powerpuff Girls 46 (Robbie Busch + Ian Boothby & various) The Powerpuff villains steal the show, as the Gangreen Gang nabs Townsville's socks and Mojo Jojo kidnaps the Narrator! $2.25

Robin 122 (Bill Willingham & Rick Mays + Aaron Sowd) Robin's in for the battle of his life against madman mob-enforcer Johnny Warren. But when the bloody conflict takes a mystical turn, will either combatant survive? .. $2.25

Rose & Thorn 2 (Gail Simone & Adriana Melo + Dan Green) Determined not to let a minor setback like the disfigurement of a patient get in the way of his experiment, Dr Chritlow guides Rhosyn through the next phase of his radical psychiatric therapy. $2.95

Smallville 6 (Mark Verheiden + Clint Carpenter & Tom Derenick + Adam DeKraker) Lex finds himself on the psychiatrist's couch explaining his time lost at sea, while Clark is put in a situation in which he must use his powers to save Lana from a criminal. $3.95

Smax 5 (Alan Moore & Zander Cannon and Andrew Currie; *America's Best Comics)* Jeff Smax and his fellow Neopolis police officer Toybox are engaged in an epic struggle when Death comes a-calling. $2.95

Superman/Batman 6 (Jeph Loeb & Ed McGuinness + Dexter Vines) The first story arc of the hottest new book of the year reaches an explosive conclusion. $2.95

final issue **Superman: Metropolis** 12 (Chuck Austen & Teddy Kristiansen) Lena has gained freedom, but at what cost to the city? Jimmy may have to make an even greater sacrifice, and Superman disappears. $2.95

Wonder Woman Archives Vol 4 (William Moulton Marston & Harry G. Peter) Reprints stories from Sensation Comics #25-32 and Wonder Woman #8-9 (1944) and features an introduction by Comics Buyers Guide's Maggie Thompson. 204pg $49.95

Marvel

Elektra 32 *(Fever* 1 of 3; Robert Rodi & Steve Cummings) Elektra must take out a petty Russian mobster on Brighton Beach while fighting the mother of all Asian flu viruses. $2.99

one-shot **Essential Punisher** Vol 1 (various) Collects in black and white format Amazing Spider-Man #129, #134-135, #161-162, #174-175, #201-202 and Annual #15, Giant-Size Spider-Man #4, Marvel Preview Presents #2, Marvel Super Action #1, Captain America #241, Daredevil #182-184, Spectacular Spider-Man #81-83 and Punisher #1-5. 568pg b&w $14.99

Exiles 41 *(A Nocturne's Tale* 1 of 2; Jim Calafiore) A special look into the life of Nocturne before she joined the Exiles! See what her life was like back when she lived at Xavier's Mansion with her father, Nightcrawler, and the school's headmaster, Wolverine. $2.99

Hawkeye 4 (Fabian Nicieza & Stefane Raffaele) Hawkeye's Myrtle Beach mystery spirals out of Clint's control just as the little Southern secret worth hundreds of millions of dollars was coming into focus. $2.99

Hulk: Gray 5 (Jeph Loeb & Tim Sale) Fresh from a battle with Iron Man, the Army is still hot on the Hulk's trail. $3.50

Human Torch 9 *(A Plague of Locusts* 3 of 4; Karl Kesel & Skottie Young) The Torch makes horrific discoveries about the Locust Project. $2.99

Inhumans 10 *(No Matter The Cost* 2 of 4; Sean McKeever, pencils by Dave Ross) A spoiled, boorish college guy is courting Nahrees, much to her dismay. $2.99

Namor 11 (Andi Watson + Bill Jemas & Joe Bennett) Tension between Atlantis and the land-dwellers reaches a boiling point. $2.99

New Mutants 10 *(The Ties That Bind* 4 of 6; Christina Weir + Nunzio De Filippis & Carlo Barberi) The New Mutants cope with the death of one of their own and the surprise return of one of the original New Mutants. $2.99

New X-Men 152 (Grant Morrison & Marc Silvestri) The dream of one man long dead still remains true – that of Professor Charles Xavier, and that of the X-Men. $2.25

Runaways 10 (Brian K. Vaughan & Adrian Alphona) The Runaways head into battle with their new recruit, and not everyone will make it out alive. . $2.99

Spider-Girl 69 *(Truth* 1 of 2; Tom DeFalco & Ron Frenz) Doctor Octopus is back – and not Otto Octavius. The Man-Wolf returns – and not John Jameson. Secrets are revealed when Mayday Parker finally confronts Brad Miller and Jack Jameson learns the truth about his father's deadly secret. $2.99

Spider-Man/Doctor Octopus: Out of Reach 3 (of 5; Colin Mitchell & Keron Grant) Doc Ock has a new teen genius sidekick, Brigham Fontaine, but Brigham is starting to get restless and tired of Doc stealing all the glory. $2.99

Thanos 5 *(Epiphany* 5 of 6; Jim Starlin) Galactus sends his Punishers after Thanos and Warlock. $2.99

Ultimate Fantastic Four 2 (Mark Millar + Brian Michael Bendis & Adam Kubert) Reed Richards has succeeded in creating a technology that will revolutionise human society and he's asked his three friends – Ben Grimm and Sue and Johnny Storm – to join him in its inaugural testing. $2.25

Uncanny X-Men 438 *(She Lies with Angels* 2 of 5; Chuck Austen & Salvador Larroca) A special tale of the heart revolves around two young star-crossed lovers, caught between the forces of their families' opposing views on the human/mutant race situation. ... $2.25

Uncanny X-Men Vol 4: The Draco (Chuck Austen & Sean Phillips + Philip Tan) The entire X-Men team gathers together to embark on an adventure that will reveal secrets of the true origins and real family history of one of their long-time and most popular members, Nightcrawler. Collects Uncanny X-Men #428-434. 168pg $15.99

Wolverine 10 *(Coyote Crossing* 4 of 5; Greg Rucka & Leandro Fernandez) Logan has gone south of the border in search of the mysterious Rojas, the drug lord responsible for the death of 19 men, women and children. $2.25

X-Treme X-Men Vol 6: Intifada (Chris Claremont & Igor Kordey) The X-Treme team faces off against a hostile X-Corp in California as a brand new mutant menace comes to the forefront. Collects X-Treme X-Men #24, and #31-35. 152pg $16.99

ON SALE FROM

JAN 28

Dark Horse

Astro Boy Vol 23 (Osamu Tezuka) This, the final volume in the definitive Astro Boy collection, features Astro Boy short stories with robots, ray guns and rockets. 192pg b&w $9.95

The Chronicles of Conan Vol 3: The Monster of the Monoliths and Other Stories (Roy Thomas & Barry Windsor-Smith + Gil Kane; tpbk) Collecting the early Conan comic-book stories by Roy Thomas and Barry Windsor-Smith. This volume collects issues #14, #15, and #17-21. 156pg $15.95

Crush 4 (Jason Hall & Sean Murphy) With Agent Bixby's monstrously strong lackey, Brute, ripping apart Liz's high school, our heroine is forced to fight back as her demonic alter-ego, Crush. $2.99

Fused: Think Like A Machine 2 (Steve Niles + Josh Medors & Peter Repovski) When Mark and Nikki decide to leave the military base and try life as civilians, Doctor Hussar and the Implementers take drastic action and turn to the darkest, most dangerous secrets of the US military for help. $2.99

Go Boy 7 6 (Brian Augustyn + Jon Sommariva & Kris Justice) Can Go Boy 7 and Jett Girl turn the tide before the Cultist's swarm of ravenous robots put the bite on the President? $2.99

Judge Dredd vs Aliens: Incubus (various) Judge Dreddfaces off against Aliens in a battle that just may bring Mega-City One to its knees! Collects the four-issue miniseries. 104pg $12.95

one-shot **Star Wars: The Rite of Passage** (John Ostrander & Jan Duursema + Ray Kryssing) A royal heir has been kidnapped – along with Jedi Master Tholme, who was protecting the boy. 120pg .. $12.95

Super Manga Blast! 39 (various) In *What's Michael?,* Michael frustrates a photographer and exposes the dangers of cat-snuggling Kobayashi. 128pg b&w $5.99

Ultraman Tiga 6 (Tony Won & Khoo Fuk Lung) Ultraman Tiga finds himself up against a pair of horrifying alien nasties looking to tag-team their way through the intergalactic hero. $3.99

Usagi Yojimbo 72 (Stan Sakai) When the ronin Usagi and his young charge, Jotaro, travel to a remote village, they are met with a cold and uncomfortable reception. 24pg b&w $2.99

DC Comics

Batman 623 *(Broken City* 4 of 6; Brian Azzarello & Eduardo Risso) The mystery surrounding the killer of a boy's parents deepens as Batman viciously tears into

close-up

Nightwing: Big Guns

DC Comics

Writer: Chuck Dixon

Artists: various

Reprinting Nightwing #46-50 and material from Nightwing 80-Page Giant #1 and Nightwing Secret Files. Dick Grayson needs to clean up the corrupt police force in Blüdhaven, and finally gets his chance when he joins its ranks. Nightwing must also deal with the out-of-control Nite-Wing; Sylph, a lady with a grudge; Torque, the former cop; and Hella, who's mad about cops. But not in a good way. 192pg $14.95

ON SALE JANUARY 21

the stoolies and criminals of Gotham City for answers. $2.25

Caper 4 (Judd Winick & Farel Dalrymple) Jacob and Isadore Weiss's plans of revenge and escape are coming to fruition, but the price they must pay will push them to the breaking point. $2.95

Cartoon Cartoons 26 (various) Kid Numbah Five leads the rest of the Kids in stealing a candy jewel back from Stickybeard the Pirate. $2.25

Catwoman 27 (Ed Brubaker & Paul Gulacy + Jimmy Palmiotti) Selina crosses paths with the Dark Knight as she scours the East End for the mastermind behind the brutal kidnapping that put one of her friends in the hospital. $2.50

The Flash 206 *(Ignition 6 of 6;* Geoff Johns & Alberto Dose) Determined to put a stop to the cop killings, The Flash races through Keystone City for a final showdown with the unexpected culprit. $2.25

one-shot **Green Arrow: The Sounds of Violence** (Kevin Smith & Phil Hester + Ande Parks) Collects Green Arrow (current series) #11-15, exploring Oliver Queen's relationships with his son, Connor Hawke, former flame the Black Canary and Mia, the young girl toying with the possibility of becoming the next Speedy. 128pg $12.95

Green Lantern 173 (Ben Raab & James Bosch + Rodney Ramos) Now that he knows the Weaponers of Qward hold the true power behind the Black Circle, Green Lantern decides to go it alone so as not to risk the lives of his friends. $2.25

Hawkman 24 *(Black Reign 4 of 6;* Geoff Johns & Rags Morales + Michael Bair) Scattered throughout the country of Kahndaq, in a land as deadly as Black Adam and his team of allies, the JSA plan to make their last stand. $2.50

Hellblazer 192 *(Staring at the Wall 4 of 5;* Mike Carey & Marcelo Frusin; *Vertigo)* Humanity is in the maw of the Beast, the cities of the world are on fire, and John Constantine is somewhat worse than missing in action. $2.75

JLA 92 (Dennis O'Neil & Tan Eng Huat) The JLA takes its shape-shifting extraterrestrial visitor on a grand tour of the wonders of Earth – but the alien seems more inspired by our planet's darker aspects. $2.25

The Legion 29 (Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Chris Batista + Chip Wallace) In the 31st Century, on one tiny, surviving scrap of the continuum, the Legion stages a final, desperate effort to restore cosmic order and prevent the total eradication of their universe. $2.50

new **Midnight, Mass: Here There Be Monsters** 1 (of 6; John Rozum & Paul Lee; *Vertigo)* The messianic creature Magellan is about to put the Kadmons' skills – and their love for one another – to the ultimate test. . $2.95

one-shot **Pride & Joy** (Garth Ennis & John Higgins; tpbk) Collecting the four issue miniseries. Tells the story of Jimmy Kavanagh, a widower struggling to raise his young daughter and rebellious teenaged son. 104pg $14.95

Promethea 29 (Alan Moore & J.H. Williams III and Mick Gray; *America's Best Comics)* As New York comes under siege, Promethea settles in to the business of fulfilling her duty – which just happens to be ending the world. .. $2.95

Reign of the Zodiac 6 (Keith Giffen & Colleen Doran + Bob Wiacek) Vatican Monsignors struggle with the realisation that they're detaining extraterrestrials. Several time zones away, the secret is already out. $2.75

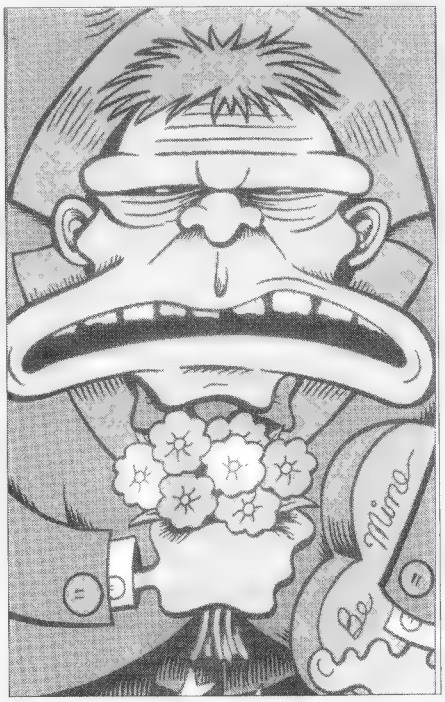
Superman 201 *(Strange New Visitor* 3 of 3; Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Karl Kerschl) Superman is still missing. Believing that Majestic is the cause of the crisis that is plaguing Metropolis, the heroes unite against him. But will this lead to a greater cataclysm for the city? $3.50

Teen Titans Go! 3 (J. Torres & Tim Smith) Cyborg learns the difference between being cool and lame as Cinderblock attempts to destroy Jump City. $2.25

one-shot **Thundercats: The Return** (Ford Lytle Gilmore & Ed Benes + Joe Pimentel; *WildStorm)* The second Thundercats miniseries, collected for the first time. It's been five long years since the events of Thundercats: Reclaiming Thundera, but it feels like an eternity. Now, Lion-O is finally about to return... but he doesn't know what's happened in his absence. 128pg $12.95

Wildcats Version 3.0 #18 (Joe Casey & Francisco Ruiz Velasco; *WildStorm)* As the Halo Corporation wins the hearts and minds of consumers worldwide, the White House finally steps in to take action, and a showdown is inevitable. $2.95

Wonder Woman 200 (various) As Veronica Cale unleashes an upgraded version of one of Diana's deadliest foes, Ares' machinations on Olympus cause an astonishing change to the lives of all the Amazons of Themyscira. 64pg $3.95



close-up

Startling Stories: The Incorrigible Hulk

Marvel Comics

Writer/Artist: Peter Bagge

For Doctor Bruce Banner life is anything but normal. But what happens when two women get between him and his alter ego, the Incorrigible Hulk? Hulk confused! Indie superstar Peter Bagge adds to his Megalomaniacal Spider-Man with this satirical jab at the Hulk mythos, with a tale of dames, debauchery and destruction. $2.99

ON SALE JANUARY 28

Marvel

Amazing Spider-Man 503 (Fiona Avery + J. Michael Stracyznski & John Romita Jr) In the aftermath of the inter-dimensional rift caused by Spider-Man and Doctor Strange's battle with Dormammu, a sorceress of limitless power is set free from years of captivity. $2.25

Ant-Man 2 (Daniel Way Cover & Clayton Crain; *MAX Comics)* Ant-Man digs deeper to find out who is leaking secret information that threatens national security. $2.99

Avengers 78 (Chuck Austen & Olivier Coipel) *Lionheart of Avalon* continues. $2.25

Captain Marvel 19 (Peter David & Aaron Lopresti) The long-awaited return of Rick Jones' wife, Marlo. But her arrival may not be the upbeat event Rick had been hoping for – especially when the first thing Marlo tries to do is annihilate the new Captain Marvel. $2.99

Crimson Dynamo 6 (John Jackson Miller & Joe Corroney) The terrible truth about the Crimson Dynamo armour is out, and The Konsortium emerges to seize power when Russia falls. . $2.50

Deathlok: Detour 2 (Daniel Way & Darick Robertson; *MAX Comics)* Some genius just got the bright idea to resuscitate the killer cyborg known as Deathlok. $2.99

Earth X Vol 5: Paradise X Book II (Jim Krueger + Alex Ross & Doug Braithwaite; tpbk) Will the heroes of Earth be able to solve the problems of the Paradise they helped create? Collects Paradise X #6-12, Ragnorak, Devils, A & X. 336pg $29.99

Hulk: Nightmerica 5 (of 6; Robin Laws & Brian Ashmore) The finest minds in the world have tried and failed to cure Bruce Banner of the awful curse of the Hulk. But, perhaps, at long last, in the depths of the Nightmerica Compound, that long sought cure may have finally been found. $2.99

Incredible Hulk 66 (Bruce Jones & Doug Braithwaite) In the aftermath of last issue's carnage, Bruce and Sandra try to patch together their lives. . $2.25

Marvel Masterworks: The Fantastic Four Vol 5 (Stan Lee & Jack Kirby) Featuring the wedding of Reed and Sue, guest-starring everybody. Collects Fantastic Four Vol 1 #41-50, Annual #3. 240pg $49.99

Mystique 10 (Brian K. Vaughan & Michael Ryan) Mystique must save humanity from a deadly, mutated form of smallpox, but will she have to sacrifice the life of her loyal field handler, Shortpack, for the greater good? $2.99

Punisher Max 2 *(In The Beginning* 2; Garth Ennis & Lewis LaRosa; *MAX Comics)* One of comics' most provocative writers takes one of comics' most provocative characters in a new direction. $2.99

Silver Surfer 5 *(Communion* 5; Dan Chariton and Stacy Weiss & Lan Medina) The truth that drives the Surfer's actions comes to light, as does the horrifying fate that awaits all mankind. $2.25

Spider-Man Legends Vol 3: Todd Mcfarlane Book III (David Michelinie & Todd McFarlane; tpbk) After a popular run on Spider-Man, artist Todd McFarlane set a record for the highest-selling single comic book ever – a record that stands to this day – and later went on to create Spawn. Collects Amazing Spider-Man #315-323, #325, #328. 264pg $24.99

one-shot **Startling Stories: The Incorrigible Hulk** 1 (Peter Bagge) *See Close-Up, above.*

Ultimates 13 (Mark Millar & Bryan Hitch) Will the Chitauri alien invasion finally succeed or will the full fire-power of the Ultimates be enough to stem the tide? $3.50

Venom 10 *(Run* 5 of 5; Daniel Way & Paco Medina) What's the only thing worse than an adrenaline craving killer alien who can attach itself to any living thing on this planet? Try an adrenaline craving killer alien attached to Wolverine. $2.99

Weapon X 19 *(Countdown to Zero* 1 of 3; Frank Tieri & Jeff Johnson) Separated from her former teammates and reforming a new Gene Nation, will Marrow finally be free from the ghosts of her past? $2.99

X-Statix 18 *(Back from the Dead* 6 of 6; Peter Milligan & Mike Allred) A mysterious CD gives new meaning to the term "killer track". $2.99

X-Treme X-Men 41 *(Bogan* 2 of 5; Chris Claremont & Igor Kordey) A mysterious telepath enters into the lives of the X-Men; an unknown assailant unexpectedly captures Bishop; Sage discovers a startling secret; plus the return of one of their most dangerous foes. $2.99

RELEASED AND ON SALE IN

JANUARY

Aardvark Vanaheim

Cerebus #298 *(Latter Days* 33 of 35; Dave Sim & Gerhard) It's been a long month since the previous solicitation and he still hasn't moved. We stuck a pin in his arm. Nothing. And there are still two issues to go. 24pg b&w $2.25

Abstract Studio

Strangers In Paradise Vol 3 #63 (Terry Moore) David is a former LA street gang member with a bloody past. Now he's trying to build a new life at an eastern school. 24pg b&w $2.95

Amaze Ink/ Slave Labor

Bombaby: The Screen Goddess 2 (of 4; Antony Mazzotta) By trying to run away from her problems, Sangeeta creates a couple of new ones. That is, until a vaguely-familiar face lends a helping hand. 24pg $3.50

Charm School 10 (Elizabeth Watasin) After all the taunts, wooing, drag racing, and duelling between Dean and Fairer Than, Bunny finally makes her choice. Mature readers. 24pg b&w $2.95

one-shot **Dr Radium Volume 1: Dr Radium Battles Phill, King of the Pill Bugs** (Scott Saavedra) *See Close-Up on next page.*

Evenfall 6 (Pete Stathis) Phoebe continues her mad flight through the baffling world of Zokomaya. Mature readers. 24pg b&w $2.95

Serenity Rose 2 (Aaron A.) Ectoplasmic ponies, holy water cannons and comical hairstyles abound in the latest instalment of Serenity Rose's comic journal. 24pg b&w $2.95

Tupelo 4 (Matt De Gennaro & Phil Elliott) The final fate of Free Mind Time hangs in the balance as The World's Forgotten Boy battles Boz Williams Live from Times Square! Mature. b&w $2.95

Antarctic

Assembly 3 (Sherard Jackson) Working as a medic, Shon is bombarded daily with the gruesome sights of wrecked mechs and wounded pilots. She is still relatively safe, but as the conflict escalates, pilots are becoming scarce, and soon anyone with piloting experience will be called upon to sacrifice for their country. b&w $3.50

new **Dragon Arms: Chaos Blade** 1 (David Hutchison) The tide of battle turns for the worse when Eon decides to end the conflict himself. b&w $2.99

Gold Digger 49 (Fred Perry) Gina uses all of her resources to prevent catastrophe, especially once she learns that the Deep One is an enemy she's met before! $2.99

Gold Digger Pocket Manga Vol 2 (Fred Perry; tpbk) Join Gina and Brittany as they search a desert ruin, encounter ancient curses, militant locals and, most frightening of all, a terrifying, ancient demon mouse! 152pg b&w $9.99

new **Heaven Sent** 1 (Ben Dunn) After a traffic accident, Kyle Taylor is on the verge of death. His guardian angel Sarah makes a deal with the Angel of Death to save his life. Will it be something they'll both regret? b&w $2.99

Legends From Darkwood 2 (Christopher Reid & John Kantz) Rose searches the underworld for assistance in ending Raynd's career, while the Mayor looks into publishing his memoirs. 40pg b&w $3.50

Mangazine 51 (various) Read the American manga pioneer series Ninja High School, Families of Altered Wars, Gold Digger and more, in this Manga compilation. 150pg $9.99

Ninja High School 113 (Katie Bair) A de-aged version of macho, sexist island boy Akaru leads the gang on a magical mystery tour of a cave inhabited by a wish-granting demon. b&w $3.50

new **Screaming Angels** 1 (Ted Nomura & various) With the Nazis extending the war by bringing the

bombing to the home front, the activation of the 999th Squadron in 1945 creates an American all-female flyer Home Defense unit, a counterpart to the all- female German JG500 squadron. b&w .. $3.50

Archie Comics

Archie 545 (Greg Crosby & Stan Goldberg) Archie's royal Cousin Alistair, who first visited him back in Archie 527, makes a return trip and makes Archie look bad with his proper grammar and manners. $2.19

Archie & Friends 80 (Craig Boldman & Dan Parent) Archie is convinced he's overheard Mr Lodge hatching an evil plot! $2.19

Archie's Mysteries 33 (various) A graffiti vandal is spreading art all over town, including the high school and Pop Tate's Chocklit Shoppe! $2.19

Betty 135 (various & Stan Goldberg) Bright and beautiful, smart and sassy, everyone's favourite girl-next-door is here in all-new adventures! $2.19

Betty & Veronica 197 (Bill Golliher & Jeff Shultz) Betty and Veronica plan a surprise reunion between Ms Grundy and her high school sweetheart/debating team colleague. $2.19

Jughead 156 (Craig Boldman & Rex Lindsey) Worried his pal Archie's reputation is too tarnished due to all his clumsy mishaps, Jughead volunteers to become his PR agent and sway public opinion. $2.19

Sabrina the Teenage Witch 55 (Holly Golightly) Sabrina tutors Shinji with his charm school classes, but is Shinji studying the charm lessons or Sabrina's charms? $2.19

Sonic the Hedgehog 132 (Bollers + Manak & Amash) Sonic, Knuckles, and the entire Kingdom of Acorn launch a two-pronged defense against the forces of Eggman's Empire. $2.19

Veronica 149 (Dan Parent) After her triumphant return last month, Cheryl Blossom is back for another round of love triangle trouncing! $2.19

Avatar Press

one-shot **Cyberangels Preview** (Bill Maus) Mercy, Allura, and the other Cyberangles are back in an all-new series by neo-manga master Maus! 16pg b&w $2.50

Frank Miller's Robocop 7 (of 9; Frank Miller & Jose Ryp) The cops are being hunted by the Rehabs, and they don't even have enough bullets to defend themselves. $3.50

one-shot **Hellina vs Pandora** 0 (Doug Miers & Rafa Lopez) Scythe has set her sights on unifying all of Hell under one ruler, but that will prove no easy task with Hellina against her. 16pg b&w ... $2.50

Joe Landsdale's The Drive-In 4 (of 4; Joe Lansdale & Andres Guinaldo) A small group of friends are holding on to their last bits of sanity, hoping to find some way out before the Drive-In claims its final victims! Mature. b&w ... $3.50

Mark Millar's The Unfunnies 2 (Mark Millar & Anthony Williams) The poor Crow family just get dragged further into the degrading lifestyle they have been forced into. $3.50

Stargate SG-1: POW 1 (James Anthony & Renato Guedes) Reconnaissance has discovered an alien invasion force with plans of conquest for planet Earth. Caught in a firefight, the escaping team from Stargate Command unknowingly allows a mysterious serpent-headed Goa'uld Lord access into the SGC. $3.50

Steven Grant's My Flesh Is Cool 2 (of 3; Steven Grant & Sebastian Fiumara) The series takes a radical turn that puts Evan Knox in way over his head as he discovers that his secret is out, and he isn't the only person who can jump bodies! $3.50

one-shot **Razor X: Requiem** (Christensen + Seifert & Lyon + Amorim; tpbk) This volume collects the original Razor/Pandora special, as well as the rare, sultry expanded edition story, and a whole new batch of never-before-seen pages fleshing out more of Razor's history and her conflict with the demoness Requiem. 48pg b&w $6.99

Bongo Comics

Futurama Comics 16 (Boothby & Lloyd) When Professor Farnsworth's clone Cubert shows a slight dip in his studies and a decrease in his IQ, he is sent across the galaxy in search of a school that will save his brain from atrophying. $2.99

Heroes Anonymous 4 (of 6; Gimple + Morrison & Wyck) As one of the hottest TV and movie stars in the world, Asher Hutchton sips Cristal, hangs out on yachts, and rides around in a fleet of Hummers! As the Gadfly, he gets shot with lasers, winds up passed out in craters, and often collides into billboards. Mature readers. b&w $2.99

Simpsons Comics 90 (Boothby & Escobar) Homer chaperones Lisa's class on an out-of-state fieldtrip to a museum. $2.99

Claypool

Elvira 129 (Strom + Sutton & Anderson) Something nasty is coming through the cable-TV lines, and Elvira's enlisted by dapper spy McSnee to go undercover and find out why Nuttizon Cable is a threat to modern culture. Photo cover. b&w $2.50

Soulsearchers 64 (David + Heebink & Milgrom) Newlyweds Bridget and Baraka's travels take them to the Cathedral of Notre Vouer, headquarters of the Mimes, where the Cantrip Clan of demi-demons reaches across the Atlantic to destroy them. b&w ... $2.50

CrossGen

new **Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang** 1 (Tony Bedard & Mike Perkins) From Moscow to Beijing, everyone knows the world's top espionage agent is Sir Charles Basildon of Her Majesty's Secret Service, but no one knows what he really looks like. $2.95

Abadazad 2 (J.M. DeMatteis & Mike Ploog) Sped straight out of Brooklyn, 14 year-old Kate finds herself in the magical land she's known only as fiction! .. $2.95

Brath 12 (Chuck Dixon & Andrea DiVito) By order of Emperor Priscus, Brath takes on all comers in a duel to the death! Will the barbarian war-chief walk from the bloody sands of the gladiator arena? $2.95

Brian Pulido's Lady Death: A Medieval Tale 12 (Brian Pulido) Can Lady Death rescue her father from the time-warping Welf Hole? Will Archbishop Vittorio declare war on the Eldritch? Will Thorm Gara unleash the spell-cannon on humanity? $2.95

The First Vol 6: Ragnarok (Barbara Kesel & Andy Smith; graphic novel) Driven apart by intrigue and treachery, the rival houses of the godlike First explode when their true nature is finally revealed! Collecting The First #32-37! 160pg $15.95

Meridian 44 (Barbara Kesel & Vincenzo Cucca) In an ultimate test of her abilities, Sephie faces off against the strike squad handpicked by Ilahn – and the ending will deliver drastic changes both for our young hero and her scheming uncle! $2.95

Mystic Traveler Vol 2: The Demon Queen (Ron Marz & Brandon Peterson; graphic novel) Given unimaginable magical might, party girl Giselle Villard must now face the uncontrollable evil of Animora! Collecting Mystic #7-12. 160pg $9.95

The Path 23 (Ron Marz & Matthew Smith) At long last, Obo-san and his rebel forces collide with the vast army of Emperor Mitsumune! Who will survive the fields of death? $2.95

Negation 26 (Tony Bedard & Paul Pelletier) Love and betrayal take on cosmic proportions as Negation's queen of mean hooks up with the god-emperor of destruction! $2.95

Route 666 #20 (Tony Bedard & Karl Moline) Cassie and Cisco are kidnapped to the communist state of Rodinia – which has been invaded by the hellish forces of Perdition! $2.95

Scion 44 (Ian Edginton & Sergio Cariello) Their respective kingdoms overrun by the robotic Tigris invaders, Ethan and Ashleigh make one final desperate stand to save their new home! $2.95

Scion Vol 6: The Royal Wedding (Ron Marz & Jim Cheung; graphic novel) Will Ethan's sister marry his hated arch-nemesis Bron – or can the young prince stop the ceremony that will bind two warring kingdoms? Collecting Scion #34-39! 160pg $15.95

one-shot **Silken Ghost** Vol 1 (Chuck Dixon & Wil Rosado; graphic novel) From the pages of Way of the Rat comes a never-before-revealed adventure of the masked martial artist! Collecting Silken Ghost #1-5. 160pg $9.95

Sojourn 31 (Ian Edginton & Greg Land) Venturing to the frozen wastes of Skarnhime, our heroic trio meets the ice trolls known as the Iskani! But will these fearsome warriors help Arwyn, Gareth and Cassidy face the beast that hungers for their flesh? $2.95

Way of the Rat 21 (Chuck Dixon & Jeff Johnson) Boon and Po Po have stumbled upon a cave filled with riches, but they have also found a vicious guardian that won't rest until all intruders are dead! $2.95

Fantagraphics

Underworld Volume 5: My Little Funny (Kaz; tpbk) For the first time, this volume will include an all-new eight page, full-colour comic story entitled *A Slice of Eye*, starring Salvador Dali! Mature readers. 88pg $9.95

one-shot **Tell Me Something** (Jason; graphic novel) Tell Me Something picks up the stylised anthropomorphic characters of Jason's earlier works, as well as the challenge of all-pantomime, to weave a yarn of young love thwarted and rekindled. 48pg b&w $6.95

one-shot **The Comics Journal Special Edition: Winter 2004 Special** (ed Gary Groth) Jules Feiffer, Art Spiegelman, Chris Ware, and the late Al Hirshfeld come together to reflect on their 200-plus years of collective experience as artists in a series of conversations and interviews. 192pg $19.95

Image Comics

Aria Vol 2: The Soulmarket (Brian Holguin & various; tpbk) Kildare's world is turned upside down when Goodfellow, the mischievous sprite immortalized in Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, comes to New York. Collects Aria: The Soul Market #1-6. 144pg $16.95

Blockhedz 3 (Brandon Schultz & Mark Davis + Mike Davis) Blak is hell bent on finding the Wild Dawgs, and avenging his brother's death, but the evil within him has begun to take hold. $2.95

new **Bloodstream** 1 (Adam Shaw + Penny Register & Shaw) Exotic dancer Amber O'Neill is all too familiar with men taking advantage of her, but nothing could prepare her for becoming the target of a secretive biotech company developing an experimental new blood substitute. $2.95

Case Files: Sam and Twitch 9 (Mark Andreyko & Paul Lee) As Sam and Twitch delve deeper into the past of the Halloran family, known as America's Royalty, the detectives uncover more than they bargained for – and place themselves in the crosshairs of a 50 year-old conspiracy! b&w $2.50

new **The Clock Maker: Act 1** (Jim Krueger & various) Hidden in Switzerland is a giant clockworks. The clock is the cause and sustainer of the Earth's revolutions. And more, it is the gateway to Heaven itself. Astrid Bonn returns to Switzerland to mourn the mysterious deaths of a brother and a father she hardly knew only to learn their deaths were no accident. Collects The Clock Maker #1-4. 64pg $6.95

new **Common Grounds** 1 (Troy Hickman & various; *Top Cow*) Welcome to Common Grounds, the hero hangout, where true tales of the human side of the superhuman get spilled every month. $2.99

Cursed 4 (of 4; Tippi Blevins + Fiona Avery & various; *Top Cow*) The final battle between Victor Hahn and Shan Beaumont rages and the world's fate hangs in the balance. $2.99

one-shot **Desperate Times** 0 (Chris Eliopoulos) Everything changes in this new series and there are surprises galore to go with all the laughs. b&w $2.95

The Hedge Knight 5 (George R.R. Martin + Ben Avery & Mike S. Miller + Mike Crowell) Dunk simply wanted to join the tourney lists and start his new life as a knight. Now, after offending the King's son while protecting the weak, he faces a trial by combat. $2.95

Hellhounds 6 (George T. Singley IV & Joe Abraham) King and Shock are on the trail of the ruthless super villain Gol! Corpses are lining the streets of Hadean Gates and our heroes are running out of time and patience! $2.95

Invincible 10 (Robert Kirkman & Cory Walker) Mark's dad, Omni-Man finds himself going toe-to-toe with a villain that might be too deadly for even him. $2.95

new **Kabuki: The Alchemy** 1 (David Mack) It's a new start for Kabuki, plus this issue includes a special chronology of the evolution of Kabuki's early beginnings. $2.95

one-shot **Kane, Vol 1: Greetings From New Eden** (Paul Grist; tpbk) Detective Kane returns to active duty with the New Eden Police following a six-month suspension after he shot and killed his partner Dennis Harvey. Collects Kane 1-4. 120pg b&w $11.95

one-shot **Legacy of Kain: Defiance** (Scott

close-up

Dr Radium Battles Phill, King of the Pill Bugs

Amaze Ink

Writer/Artist: Scott Saavedra

Stuck with Penny, a girl from the present presently trapped in the future, Dr Radium suffers distractions from giant scientist rats, screaming dinosaurs, and Phill, one very mad King of the Pill Bugs! Collects all five issues of Scott Saavedra's Dr Radium: Man of Science series, plus the obligatory hitherto-unpublished tale. 112pg b&w $9.95

ON SALE JANUARY

Tucker & Tyler Kirkham + Tyson Wengler; *Top Cow*) Explosive prelude to the newest chapter in the chronicles of Kain and Raziel. Join Kain as he travels the dangerous land of Nosgoth on his quest to control fate, and put right his own destiny. $2.99

PvP 6 (Scott Kurt) Skull the Troll wants to be a comicbook artist in the worst way, and unfortunately, he is. When Skull finds a home for his imperfect creation in the close-knit alternative comics community he learns that to stay in this club, success is not an option. b&w $2.95

Rex Mundi, Vol 1: The Guardian of the Temple (Arvid Nelson & Eric J; tpbk) As Doctor Julien Saunière investigates the theft of a medieval scroll from a Paris church, he stumbles onto a series of horrific ritual murders and an ancient secret society somehow connected to the mysterious document. Collects Rex Mundi #0-5. 176pg $14.95

Savage Dragon 115 (Erik Larsen) Special 80-page *Vicious Circle Rising* finale. As the new head of the Vicious Circle takes control, The Dragon brings all his allies, past and present together for one final battle in an attempt to destroy the Vicious Circle once and for all. 80pg $6.95

one-shot **Shangri-La** (Marc Bryant & Shepherd Hendrix; graphic novel) *See Close-Up, right.*

Spawn 142 (Brian Holguin + Todd McFarlane & Angel Medina) Al Simmons continues his journey through the dark, secret history of creation as he relives the lives of the Hellspawn who have gone before him. $2.50

one-shot **Stay Puffed** (John Layman & Dave Crosland) This one has it all: Shock! Awe! Saddam Hussein! Uday Hussein! Weapons of Mass Destruction! b&w $2.95

Street Fighter 5 (Ken Siu-Chong & various) Guile and Chun-Li must not only face and fight the man they once knew as Charlie, but also the man responsible for their pain and suffering... M. Bison! $2.95

Tomb Raider 38 (James Bonny & Wilson Tortosa + Jon Sibal; *Top Cow*) Lara Croft investigates a string of brutal killings throughout England, which all bear the mark of ritualised human sacrifice. $2.99

Trakk: Monster Hunter 3 (Brian Haberlin + Francis Takenaga & Philip Tan) After years of nameless destitution, a series of vicious and unexplained force Trakk to choose between drunken isolation and his cause. $2.95

Victory 4 (Marcelo Cassaro & Eduardo Francisco) In an epic battle that threatens to destroy the Earth, Victory must decide if using her ultimate attack will be enough to defeat the monster-god, K'Athanoa. $2.95

The Walking Dead 4 (Robert Kirkman & Tony Moore) Is Rick crazy enough to risk his life for the good of the camp? b&w ..... $2.95.

Wanted 2 (Mark Millar & J.G. Jones + Paul Mounts; *Top Cow*) The Fox has opened Wesley's eyes in a hail of bullets and blood, and Wesley learns he is heir to incredible powers and incredible fortune. All he has to do to claim them is become a killer, and one of the most vile supervillains the world has ever seen. ..... $2.99.

Wildguard: Casting Call 5 (Todd Nauck) A dark coalition is set to destroy WildGuard before it's formed. ... $2.95

Moonstone

new **The Cisco Kid** 1 (Jim Duffy & Jerry Decaire) A gang of outlaws steals the only thing Cisco's got worth having – a locket with the picture of the woman who haunts him. Mature readers. $2.95

Mr Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons 3 (of 3; Justin Gray & Lee Ferguson) Mr Keen, Ninette, and Mike make their siege against Lucien Denali's horrible sex mansion in this ego-destroying finale! Mature readers. $2.95

Oni Press

Courtney Crumrin in the Twilight Kingdom 2 (of 4; Ted Naifeh) Courtney is going to Coven School, where the children talk endlessly about their magical secrets. If only they knew what their new classmate is capable of! b&w $2.99

one-shot **Killer Princesses** (Gail Simone & Lea Hernandez; tpbk) Three tiaras, loads of hi-tech weapons, one special mission, and not a clue to be found! Mature readers 96pg b&w $9.95

Love Fights 7 (Andi Watson) The romantic intrigue deepens as Guthrie's attempts to part Jack and Nora grow ever more devious. Mature readers. b&w $2.99

one-shot **Midnight Mover** (Gary Phillips + Jeremy Love & Jeff Wasson; tpbk) Danny's a washed-up war hero turned escort bodyguard. Cynthia spends her days wearing a badge and her nights draped in chains and leather. Her pious partner's a family man with faith. And one murder is about to send the three of them on a rollercoaster ride through LA's seedy underbelly! Mature readers. 120pg b&w $11.95

Scooter Girl 6 (Chynna Clugston-Major) Will Ashton score with Margaret? Will Kitty nab Drake? Will more scooters be mangled? Mature readers. b&w $2.99

Tokyopop

new **Ai Love You** Vol 1 (of 9; Ken Akamatsu; graphic novel) Hitoshi Kobe is the unluckiest man alive, though he does have a knack for creating Artificial Intelligences. Number Thirty is Hitoshi's favourite A.I. and the only girl he can talk to. b&w $9.99

new **Digimon Zero Two** Vol 1 (of 2; Akiyoshi Hongo; graphic novel) Three years after the defeat of the Apocalymon, dark powers begin to rise again in the Digi World. 160pg b&w $9.99

Digimon Zero Two Vol 2 (of 2; Akiyoshi Hongo; graphic novel) After fixing the Ken/Digimon Emperor issue with a little love, the Digidestined now must stop the emotionally-troubled BlackWarGreymon in his quest to destroy the Destiny Stones. 192pg b&w $9.99

Dragon Knights Vol 12 (of 17; Mineko Ohkami: graphic novel) Shydeman and Shyrendora are able to weaken Lord Lykouleon's protective shield beyond the breaking point and attack the castle. 200pg b&w $9.99

new **Fruits Basket** Vol 1 (of 11; Natsuki Takaya; graphic novel) Tohru Honda was an orphan when one day fate kicked her out of the house and on to land belonging to the mysterious Sohma family. Everything goes well until she discovers the Sohma family's secret, when hugged by members of the opposite sex, they turn into their Chinese Zodiac animal! 208pg b&w $9.99

new **Getbackers** Vol 1 (of 21; Yuya Aoki & Rando Ayamine; graphic novel) Ginji Amano and Ban Mido's circumstances are so dire that death by starvation seems imminent until a homeless man takes pity on them and shares some of the food he's been able to scrounge. 216pg b&w $9.99

new **Kill Me, Kiss Me** Vol 1 (Lee Young Yuu; graphic novel) When Teyon Ihm finds out that the idol star she's adored for ages is currently attending the same school as her identical cousin Junghu Ihm, she convinces her kin to exploit their similitude and switch places. 192pg b&w $9.99

new **Les Bijoux** Vol 1 (of 6; Eun-Ha Jo & Sang-Sun Park; graphic novel) The world is divided into 12 Mines and ruled by the tyrannical and oppressive regime known as the Habit. A union between a hunchback and a dwarf produces a mysterious child with a destructive destiny to kick the habit – or die trying! 200pg b&w $9.99

Planet Ladder Vol 6 (of 7; Yuri Narushima; graphic novel) Ancient prophecy dictates that eight out of nine worlds will perish in a great apocalypse. Kaguya's has made a radical decision to save all the worlds and while some see this as an unprecedented push for peace, others seize the moment to begin a multi-dimensional war in the hopes of conquering the universe. 200pg b&w $9.99

Power Rangers 'Ninja Storm' Cine-Manga Vol 3 (of 5; various; graphic novel) The evil Thunder Rangers steal Cam's disk containing the super tsunami cycles and use their own tsunami cycles to fight the Wind Rangers and disable the Storm Megazord. 128pg b&w $9.99

new **Suki** Vol 1 (of 3; CLAMP; graphic novel) Hinata Asahi is a high school student who lives alone with only her teddy bears to keep her company. Her life becomes much more exciting when the handsome Shirou Asou moves in next door. b&w $9.99

INTERNATIONAL

Black Library

Hellbrandt Grimm Volume 2: Some Swift and Brutal Hand (various; graphic novel) The second graphic novel detailing the exploits of Hellbrandt Grimm as he wanders the Old World. 64pg b&w $6.99

one-shot **Liber Chaotica: Tzeentch** (various) Tzeentch's twisted minions hide behind a veil of secrecy, plotting to warp the Old World with their dark magic. Mature. 96pg b&w $29.99

Warhammer Monthly 77 (various) Princeps Hekate and the battle weary crew of Imperius Dictatio struggle against the rising tide of Chaos that threatens to engulf the Imperium and destroy mankind. 40pg b&w $3.50

UK NEWSSTAND

DC Thomson

The Beano 3191-3194 (weekly; various) Classic kids humour anthology featuring Dennis the Menace, the Bash Street Kids, and all your favourites. £0.55

Beano Superstars 144 (various) One complete strip of the long-running humour anthology. 36pg £0.65

Classics from the Comics 90 (various) Anthology reprinting classic cartoon strips from DC Thomson's vintage kids' comics Beano and Dandy. 68pg b&w £1.20

Commando Action and Adventure Stories 3670-3678 (eight per month; digest; various) Featuring one self-contained comic strip per issue. Some new material. 68pg b&w £0.80

Fun-Size Beano 149-150 (fortnightly; various) Pocket-sized spin-off from the Beano featuring Dennis the Menace, and all the usual suspects. 68pg £0.60

Panini Comics

Action Man 91 (four-weekly; various) All-new soldier adventure yarns, plus quizzes and prizes based on the action figure. 28pg £1.50

Astonishing Spider-Man 104 (four-weekly; various; Marvel UK) Official UK outing for US Marvel comic adventures, with free posters and extras. 76pg £2.40

Avengers United 34 (various) Fast-paced action from Marvel's largest superhero team including the Hulk, Captain America, Iron Man, Hawkeye and the Scarlet Witch. £2.40

Doctor Who Magazine 338 (four-weekly; various) Contains celebrity interviews, feature articles and original stories based on everybody's favourite doc. 52pg £3.30

Essential X-Men 107 (four-weekly; various; Marvel UK) Contains material from US editions Giant Sized X-Men #1 and Uncanny X-Men #358. 76pg £2.40

Powerpuff Girls Powerzine 19 (various) Comicstrips and fun, entertaining and humorous features presented by the 3 super-heroines, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. £1.75

Scooby Doo 7 (various) Regular vanquishing of baddies who, frankly would have got away with it if it weren't for those pesky kids. Also contains competitions, activities, quizzes and more! £1.99

Spectacular Spider-Man 91 (various) New comic strips and games. Plus a bunch of free posters and a competition. 36pg £1.50

Transformers Armada 8 (various) Original UK comic strip, data files, cyber-puzzles, competitions and more.. £1.75

Ultimate Spider-Man 23 (various; Marvel UK) Tells a tale of Spider-Man, retold with modern-day computer enhanced artwork. This comic series focuses on the adventures of 15-year old Peter Parker as he attempts to survive battles with evil supervillains and high school bullies alike! £1.95

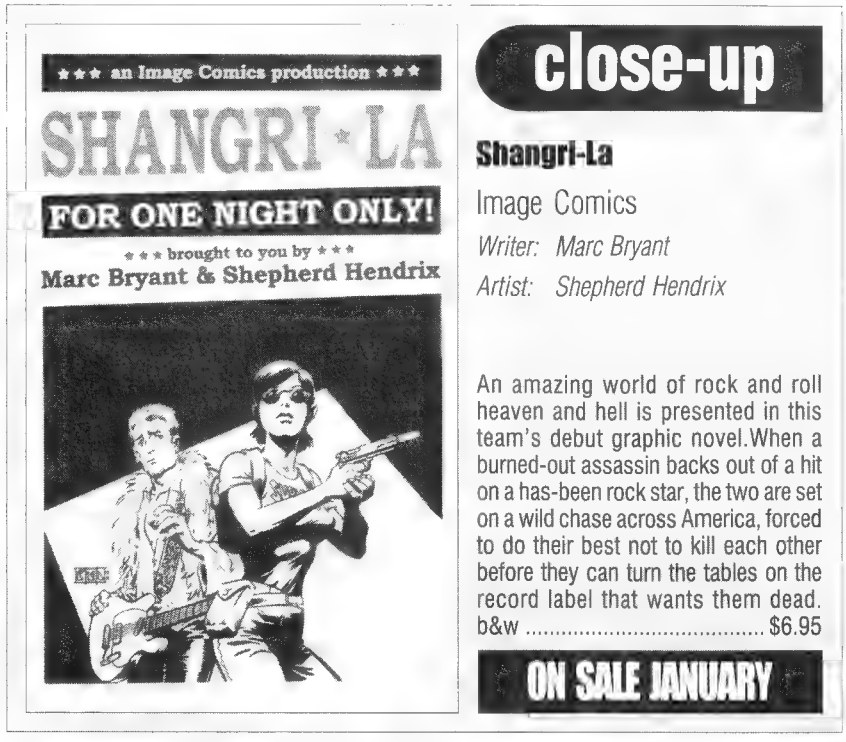
Ultimate X-Men 9 (various; Marvel UK) Reveals the incredible origins of Cyclops, Marvel Girl, Storm, Beast, Colossus, Iceman – and adds some razor-sharp adamantium just to hot things up! £1.95

Wolverine & Gambit 93 (four-weekly; various; Marvel UK) Compiles US Marvel's own brand of Wolverine comic strips plus magazine-style feature articles on the tortured toothy one. 76pg .. £2.40

Rebellion

2000 AD 1371-1374 (various) Judge Dredd battles with the gangs of Cincinatti, Captain Jack Dancer and his motley crew are in search of a missing map which will take them to the magical island of Laputa, and star-troopers The VCs must fight a war of survival on the moon of Charon. $3.75

Judge Dredd Megazine 215 (various) Sandra's adventures on Deadworld continue in the new Anderson: PSI-Division series *Half-Life*. 100pg $10.99



close-up

Shangri-La

Image Comics

Writer: Marc Bryant

Artist: Shepherd Hendrix

An amazing world of rock and roll heaven and hell is presented in this team's debut graphic novel. When a burned-out assassin backs out of a hit on a has-been rock star, the two are set on a wild chase across America, forced to do their best not to kill each other before they can turn the tables on the record label that wants them dead. b&w $6.95

ON SALE JANUARY

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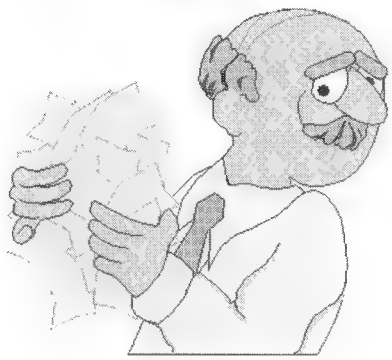

We are looking for following titles

Brave and the Bold #28-200
Amazing Spiderman (1st series) #1-400
Avengers (1st series) #1-250
X-Men, the Uncanny (1st series) #1-350
Green Lantern (1st series) #1-200
Incredible Hulk #110-400
Fantastic Four (1st series) #1-400
Journey into Mystery #83-125
Batman #150-300
Justice League of America (1stseries) #1-261
Detective Comics #300–500
Daredevil (1st series) #1-250
Superman (1st series) #200-400
Wonder Woman – ANY AND ALL

We are also looking for runs of – Spawn/Authority/Cable/Catwoman/Thunderbolts and many others. Please contact us on 020 7836 5630 if you have any of the titles listed.

Mighty World of Comicana – 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 *(020 7836 5630)*

Comment

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Comment is a forum to enable fans and professionals alike to express their personal points of view on aspects of the comics industry. As such, the following opinions do not necessarily reflect those of this publication, but space will be given in subsequent issues to well-reasoned opposing views. Submissions are edited only for grammar, clarity and brevity.

Comics, graphic novels and your libraries

Comment by Mark Badham-Moore via e-mail

I'VE always read with interest opinions on how to bring new readers in and excite them enough to keep them coming back for more. Well, now I have a suggestion: one of the biggest reasons, as far as I can tell, for a reduced readership is cost. The price of your average monthly comic is in the region of £1.60 to £1.90 and don't even get me onto so-called 'Prestige' books.

I'm married with a little boy of two and another on the way and pretty much since we set up house together my comics-buying splurges are a thing of the past.

I used to buy some really good, and also really bad comics. Prices now mean that it's even harder for young readers to get into comics on nearly any scale.

That's where I think libraries can step in and help. They allow a reader to dip their toes without wasting lots of money.

All libraries are now on-line and have electronic catalogues which can be accessed both at home or in your local branch. I reckon each of you who read this can think of at least 10 books that should be stocked by your council or county's library, and not just your bog standard Batman and Superman collections.

And now it's even easier to let them know... just e-mail them! You can usually do this via their website. The more the merrier. The more interest in these books, the more likely they are to be purchased rather than requested through the inter-library loan service, which is still conducted on scraps of paper.

Get started straight away. Future readers may start by borrowing now, but open their eyes to the variety out there and I'm sure they'll eventually start buying what they like...

By the way, talking about high costs, whatever happened to Marvel's vow that it would reduce the prices of all its collections?

Back in the day...

Truly Bizarre Comment by Comics Shop Employee, Central London

NOW, pull yourself up a chair, kids, while I tell you a tale of the old days... I must a been 15, 16.

Back then we wuz as poor as a man waiting for his issues of **Youngblood** to go up in value and when I wanted my entertainment, I had to go onto the grind fer it. I hauled news, so I did, and dropped milk..

Being a video game nut who loved the manly sport of rasslin' I nearly hucked a loogie when I wuz winder shoppin' in me local Our Price and saw ***WWF Royal Rumble*** was out, forty pounds was it gonna cost too...

Now this was a bitter col' November, I reckon... Rained every day and hailed some for good measure too. Warn't no point askin' my folks for it as I knowed they was of no money.

So I did what every pop culture junkie does, I worked my damn ass off in the mornings. Worked extra roads... carrying all those Sunday supplements and lifestyle magazines... nearly put my ol' back too... but I was happy enough to do it. Walkin' the roads with Rancid, Fugazi and The Dead Kennedys blastin' off in my ears.

That Christmas Eve I'd still fallen short, despite bein' good with my money. Dejected and despairing, I returned to the newsagent an' handed in my bag prepared for a WWF-less Yuletide. Jes' about to leave when my boss man stopped me an' says "Don't forget yer tips, son."

An' with that he handed me an envelope... full of fivers and pounds... I damn near skipped home, don'tcha know? I sat at home an' hung roun' the phone as time lurched towards ten o'clock, which were when Our Price opened up for business... And when it did I done sprang clear 10 feet 'cross the room to ring 'em up. Made sure they had it afore's I went disappointing meself.

They did, I woulda caught the dang bus, but hell on it, I still

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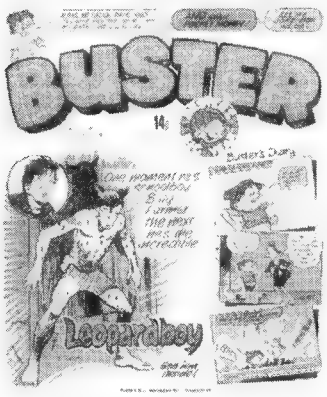

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weren't dried up from the mornin' rain so hell on Aunt Nessie if I din' half walk half sprint the hour's walk to the branch. An' Lord save 'em if they weren't doin' a "buy anythin' over twenny pound an' get ten per cent off too"!

I got my game an' still had enough change to pick up the first **Batman Animated** book, an' good readin' it was too. I was the happiest monkey in th' land that day, I tell ya.

So anyways... I went on-line the other day to see when ***Raw 2*** was coming out on the X-Box an ordered my copy... It would be forty pounds regular or I could get it from them for ten pound cheaper. Ain't that funny how a thing could cost forty poun' ten years ago and still be forty pounds today?

'Cause bein a professional comic fan... that mean I reads 'em like you do but I gets paid to do it, heh-heh-heh! Can't help but notice, well there seem to be a few less of us aroun' every year... oh sure an we're all still here, but there used to be new faces too, an I don' see as many a those no mores. An I can't help thinkin' that maybe it's cause of the fact that these little comic books are startin' to cost a fair old amount... an' that if I only had my paper roun' these days, maybe I'd be less inclined to worry about comic books, specially as I can't find em in my local tobacconist no mores anyway.

I ain't no maths guy or nuthin, but I went scramblin' through the archive yesterday to see how much a copy o' **Amazing Spidey** cost me, came to 80p. Now you figure today it costs in the region of a pound sixty or seventy dependin' on where yer shoppin'. I figure tha's aroun' double some. Now imagine if yer video game wuz wuz caught in the same sort of inflation I'd a be payin' 'bout eighty odd pounds for my men in tights related fun an' I'd have to be givin' some long and mighty hard thought consideration afors I'd be partin' with that kind of a dough.

I'm a thinking every year it seems comics go up again, an usually it's coz of the exchange rate, although they don't seem to come back down again when the rate does. An' maybe it feels like when they put the prices up we lose us some readers.

An' those of us who stay on get charged some more to make up for those of us who's left town. An' I wonder if any of us'll be left at the end of all this.

Me, I don't really care for the newfangled glossy paper an' variant covers an all that. Let 'em print the funnybooks on ass wipin' paper fer all I care...

The League of Not So Extraordinary Gentlemen

Comment by Julian Dass, Barnsley, South Yorkshire

I'VE just been to the cinema to see what turned out to be a really dire movie adapted from a very good comicbook by Alan Moore.

After a couple of hours of enduring the on-screen action, I returned to the real world with my companion and we started chewing over the tired old debate of whether violence in movies influences people's behaviour in real life.

To my surprise, she said that she thought it did. I replied along the lines of most people being able to tell the difference between real and fantasy violence, and copycat murders inspired by some movie or other are extremely rare.

She said she agreed, but that she wasn't thinking about people aping physical actions, but the more subtle and ubiquitous messages that force or violence can be justified (usually as some means of vengeance); that force always achieves the desired result and that the use of violence always makes the world a better place.

I thought about that for a bit – it seemed a good point – but I replied that the dramatic medium has always been like that; Shakespeare for example, and even as far back as in the earliest stories of mythology. Conflict is the essence of drama.

She said she agreed, but that she thought we are probably at a stage where our technology makes the message more frequently accessed on film – every day in our own living rooms on TV, video or DVD and computer games – than it has ever been before. It's the volume that gives it its impact; repeat the same message often enough to an absorbent, passive, ill-informed or mis-informed, unquestioning audience and eventually a lot of people will believe it.

She said it perhaps wasn't the physical nature of the fantasty violence that was imitated, but rather the readiness to use force when called upon to make value judgements in the real world... such as persuading people to support the initiation of 'crusading, righteous, vengeful, proactive, pre-emptive wars'.

I thought that was a good point and supposed that gave us as an audience a responsibility to be aware of it and not simply sub-consciously absorb it.

And then I was reminded of a really dire movie adapted from a very good book by Iain Banks (one word begins with 'C').

Alan R Cookson, 4 The Cloisters, Tarleton, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 6UL

Please call or write for a more detailed description of the condition of any comics listed below, all from my personal collection. I always try to collect the highest grade possible and once bought, each comic was read carefully and stored away as a brand new copy. All issues are cents copies unless otherwise stated. Your wants lists are welcome. Postage and packing is 35p per comic. Bids welcome on expensive items and discounts for bulk purchases are negotiable.

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Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER

The mild-mannered creator/writer of the Internet's original comics industry rumour and news column has outraged many a publisher and survived more than one change of website. But, despite several attempts to stop it, the Squiddy Award-winning gutterpress site continues to thrive, with over 20,000 hits a week at its new home of www.comicbookresources.com

From his unique vantage point, Rich often scoops the industry newshounds with his stories. Here are the highlights from this month's Gutter...

Epic To Squib

I got forwarded the **Epic Anthology** e-mail sent out to creators, that Matt Brady and Eric J. Moreels also seem to have received. What neither of them mentioned was the line asking that no recipient leak the information until Marvel had solicited the project... Ah well, I guess any company loyalty went out of the window when Marvel started screwing the projects around.

So Epic Comics is being relegated to an anthology magazine... that may not have an issue out after the first one?

As far as I can tell, Epic is going backwards. In the early Eighties, Epic started as an anthology magazine, then expanded into a line of company-owned and creator-owned titles – my favourites included **The Bozz Chronicles**, **Sleeze Brothers**, **Groo** and **Stray Toasters**. This time, it's gone the other way – from a line of creator-owned new takes on Marvel characters, to a new creator and new reader friendly line of 60 titles to three of four mini-series and finally a one-off anthology.

Epic was designed as a way of introducing new talent. Not surprisingly a number of these new creators, who were promised much and now have been delivered little, are very upset and angry indeed. I've been sent a few e-mails from involved individuals and they're downhearted, disheartened and spitting teeth. They've been lied to, misled and their rights abused by their publisher, for the sake of internal politics. You know, I can't think of a better introduction to working in comics, can you?

There are moves for some people to get more work at Marvel as a result of the Epic changes, but only if they shut up about it.

Papal Infallibilty

Paul Pope is currently working on the **Solo** project from DC Comics. **Solo** will feature, as previously announced, the likes of Jim Lee, Richard Corben, Jose Munoz, Darwyn Cooke and Howard Chaykin, telling personal stories using either established DC Universe characters or new concepts. Paul's project includes a number of short colour stories including *Teenage Sidekick* featuring the Golden Age Batman and Robin, and *The Problem In Knosos*, a dramatic retelling of the Minotaur myth.

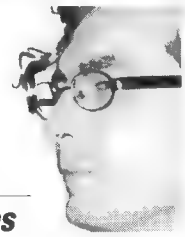
Pope is also working on a sequel project to **100%** (which itself is soon to be released as a trade paperback), DC has optioned the film rights to **Heavy Liquid** and **100%** and Andrew Cosby has optioned the rights to **Escapo**. **Heavy Liquid** will also have two volumes published in France with Spanish and Italian volumes being prepared.

No Future For You?

Bob Layton's recent interview at Comicon Pulse criticised Image by implying it was a dead company after the Devil's Due departure; "When this pullout occurs, we will probably see the beginning of the end for Image as well." This comment by Layton is interesting in light of his approach to Image Comics a

continued on next page...

Networks



Comics news and gossip on the Internet

Compiled by Chris Rice and his team of Netmites

Net sightings

Di-wrecked action

Mike Allred has been on his message boards talking about the current issues of ***X-Statix****, now shipping weekly after being delayed in the wake of the decision to not do the* Di Another Day *storyline.*

As we reported several months ago, Marvel decided not to run the story in which Princess Di returns from the dead and joins the team, after some outcry in the press. Now Allred has broken his silence on the circumstances surrounding the changes:

J. Bone is the hero in this scenario. If he weren't on board to ink I would have imploded with all the stupid changes we were forced to make. Ah, what could have been? And so you know, and I want everyone to know, no one in Marvel proper wanted to shut us down. Everyone fought the good fight – but a couple of bonehead "higher-ups", share holders or some such, wielded their power on us little comicbook makers and destroyed what could have been the most stunningly powerful comic story this year. As it is now it's just a typically excellent Peter Milligan story (despite all the arbitrary changes).

Yeah, I'm still bitter. I thought this was all behind me, but seeing the actual books come out is really stinging. The first three issues were changed the most to remove any and all connection with Di and Co. Paste-ups, re-pastes, plastic surgery – colored and re-colored (Henrietta was a red-head for awhile – but even THAT was too close to Di?!). With the fourth issue of the six-issue arc it finally became its own thing with fewer and fewer changes (mostly on the covers which came first).

And all of this is especially relevant given the recent spotlight on Diana: It rips me apart just to think about it. Peter's ingenious ideas would have been declared revelatory (hmm – maybe it's a good thing we were cut off at the knees then). Oh well, onward and upward.

It does have to be said, the issues that have come out so far are still pretty damn good, and ***X-Statix*** *continues to be one of the best books Marvel puts out.*

Above: Mike Allred's original cover to **X-Statix** #15 with Princess Di, still visible on marvel.com.

Bendis is a Fanboy

FanboyRadio.com *is a site that* Networks *has only just become aware of. It's an hour-long radio show, broadcast on* www.fanboy-radio.com *and on Dallas radio station KTCU. It's been around for about a year or so, featuring guests such as Joe Quesada, Greg Rucka, and Brian Bendis.*

Bendis was on the show in early November and had a lot of information about what's happening with his many and varied books. The writer also announced that he will be co-hosting the radio and online show on a monthly basis in the new year.

Probably the most interesting news Bendis had was about ***Powers****, which will relaunch in March with a new number one*: People who read **Powers** know that a superhero has done such damage to the world that the President called powers illegal. So, we follow Deena back to the job, on her first day back after a long while, and the whole world is different because of it. And it's like a new world, new rules, a new law, their job is new, so it's an entirely new take on **Powers**. And the cool aspect of it is that all the superheroes did what the President said because they're superheroes. All the villains are villains and they didn't do whatever he said, so it's kind of bedlam. And all the superheroes are away at a federal protection program and so on. And someone dies on page three. *He also promised that Powers will not lose its mature readers tag, as one of his Marvel books,* ***Alias*** *has done, becoming* ***The Pulse***: It's going to be even dirtier than it was before now that I don't have **Alias** to vent half my F words. Double the F words for **Powers**.

Bendis also announced that there will be a 7-page ***Powers*** *exclusive for* ***Wizard Edge*** *in a few months time – although it'll inevitably get included in the first collection of the new series.*

As for the aforementioned ***Pulse****, good news for those of you who really don't like Mark Bagley's art (and* Networks *has met a lot of*

*you recently). He will only do the first arc of the book, with **Alias** artist Michael Gaydos returning after finishing other commitments.*

*Finally, he's enjoying working with Mark Millar on **Ultimate Fantastic Four***: He's drunk a lot and he talks with a really thick Scottish accent. So I tend to listen to him go on and on and he usually passes out mid-phone call and then I just hang up and I type up what I was gonna do anyhow. And I'll send it to him and then he goes, 'Aw yeah that's what I meant!' And that's how it's been going so far.

*Alongside the recently announced **Secret War** quarterly mini-series, it would appear Bendis will be retaining his "busiest man in comics" title.*

Networks *would thoroughly recommend having a listen to* Fanboy Radio, *and just as an added incentive, the current show features our very own comics rumour monger extraordinaire, Rich Johnson...*

The return of Shatterstar?

Rob Liefield seems to have made a home for himself on the Millarworld.com *forum, and as usual is generating pages of comments from those who love and hate him.*

*He's also been dropping some pretty sizable hints that he may be about to do some more work for Marvel, in the wake of his upcoming covers for **Cable/Deadpool.***

Above: Rob Liefield's Shatterstar from **X-Force.**

*It's been suggested by other posters that Liefield is about to relaunch **X-Force**, or possibly oversee a line of **X-Force** books and has all but confirmed these rumours.*

*Liefield told one poster, who was hoping for the return of Shatterstar, that he would be "very pleased". How this would affect **X-Statix** would remain to be seen.*

Black Harvest debuts

One of comics' great undiscovered talents is Derek Kirk-Kim, proprietor of www.smallstoriesonline.com

*His new series, **Black Harvest**, has just started on the site and this meditation on body hair is extremely funny and well drawn.*

The whole site is packed with content, and it'll take a good few hours to work your way through. Well worth a look, so go and have a dekko...

Chris Bunting's COMICS WEBWORLD

*As **CI's** Panel Beaters testifies, the UK small press comic scene is going from strength to strength. Here is a selection of some related websites – and don't forget, the links pages act as doorways to yet more interesting sites that I don't have room to mention here.*

ENGINE COMICS ***www.enginecomics.co.uk***

Barry Renshaw's Engine Comics produces titles such as **Red Eye**, **Fusion** and the phenomenal **The Rough Guide to Self Publishing**. It's also a main player in the Accent UK publishing group. With cool creator bios, external reviews of its titles and a very respectable links section, this solid site really gives a feel as to what's on offer from Engine. **8**

BAM! ***http://bam.pauljholden.com***

In my **CI** comic reviews I've described **BAM** (**Bulldog Adventure Magazine**) as "a small press comic that packs more punch than many mainstream titles" but how does this online companion from one of its contributors, Paul J Holden, hold up? Sporting news, discussion forums, merchandise, character profiles – as well as looking sharp – it's certainly more bite than bark. **7**

ALCHEMY TEXTS ***www.alchemytexts.com***

The design of this site definitely requires improvement. The mish-mash of font styles on the main menu isn't pleasant on the eye, while the main frame's just boring plain text. However don't judge Bournemouth-based Alchemy Texts' strong and highly regarded output – including comics **Armageddon Patrol**, **Octobriana** and **Loxley** – on this mediocre site. **5**

THERE GOES TOKYO ***www.tgtokyo.com***

Besides being both part of the comic review team and the compilers of *Panel Beaters* for **Comics International**, Andy Smith and Leonie O'Moore also run the small press outfit, There Goes Tokyo. TGT produces titles **Midnight Oil**, **TGT Presents**, as well as graphic novels and, available here, online strips. This site provides terrific insight into it all, with creator profiles, interviews, and resources. A bustling cyber-base. **7**

THE O MEN ***www.theomen.free-online.co.uk***

Martin Eden's "super opera", **The O Men**, frequently receives a more-than-respectable 9 score in **CI**'s comic reviews, so if you're wanting to find out what all the fuss is about, then this is the place to come. It contains news, author's notes, character profiles and how to buy info, all wrapped up in a slick shell. **8**

THE SMALL PRESS F.A.Q ***www.sentex.net/~sardine/spfaq.html***

Want to self-publish or contribute to small press comics, but have no idea how and where to start? After reading Engine Comics' **The Rough Guide to Self Publishing**, bring your web-browser over to this site. With its frequently asked questions (answers provided, of course) it will give you a wealth of information, courtesy of John (**Dishman**) MacLeod. All the obvious questions are pre-empted and given straight forward and sound replies. Helpful. **7**

Honourable mentions: **DEVA COMICS** *[www.devacomics.com]* and **UNDERFIRE COMICS** *[www.underfire-comics.com]*

Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER

continued from previous page...

few weeks earlier when he approached them about publishing his Future Comics line, and was rebuffed by Jim Valentino.

One wonders why Bob Layton, unconvinced of the survival of Image Comics, was keen for them to publish his own comics. While others have thrown doubt on the longevityof Image Comics, not many have done so quite so soon after wishing to entrust Image with their creative endeavours. Aesop may wish to take notes.

Interesting Bed Fellows

One of the more common rumours doing the rounds over the last fortnight is that John Byrne is doing a **Green Lantern** project – and so is Grant Morrison.

It transpires that Grant Morrison is writing an arc for the main series, reintroducing Hal Jordan as Earth's Green Lantern, before Geoff Johns takes over the title with Carlos Pacheco. I understand that Morrison has been given the whole of the Green Lantern Corps to play with save one and that John Byrne's **Green Lantern** series will involve John Stewart. More to come on this one, I'm sure.

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Cats

I understand deal-broker and comics writer Michael Uslan was in the process of going around to a variety of comicbook license owners, looking to lock up their works for possible **T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents** movie treatment. The deal with John Carbonaro and DC over **T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents** was for the first archive and the new series to come out at about the same time.

DC didn't have anyone jumping up and down to do the book, however when Dan DiDio was brought in as a vice president of DC, **TA** was slated to be his first major project there. DiDio did have some knowledge of the **T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents**, having worked with Marv Wolfman on a **TA** animated series proposal to ABC a few years before.

DiDio didn't show anything to Carbonaro until just before an operational deadline, meaning that DC was pretty much going to blow their contract deadline for publishing the first issue of the new **TA** series. The Fiumara Brothers, who confess to being heavily influenced by **The Ultimates**, left (were dropped from) the book after they'd completed pencils and inks on the first issue and another team were brought in, but it wasn't to be.

John Carbonaro proposed that DC print the unpublished stories, originally meant for **OMNI Comics**, so they could have had something on sale by the original contract deadline. He even suggested that DC's revamp be called **The NEW T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents** and have the four stories of the OMNI inventory titled as just **T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents**, but that went nowhere.

And unless there can be an Alan Moore firewall style deal between Carbonara and DC, nothing's going to happen there. That's all so far... any more for any more? DC declined to comment.

Fable To Reality

Former DC Publisher Jenette Kahn is producing a Warner Brothers movie based on Bill Willingham's Vertigo series **Fables**.

Button It

How did the marketing guy at Rebellion Comics demonstrate the quality of the hardcover publication of John Wagner and Arthur Ranson's **Button Man** at a recent convention?

He beat himself on the head with it, repeatedly, to prove its indestructibility. The book, not his head, unfortunately.

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Reviews

Because few retailers allow titles to be read before purchase, ***Comics International****'s comprehensive reviews section enables comics readers to keep abreast of the wide range of titles currently being published and draw readers' attention to comics they might otherwise ignore. Naturally, this section is of even greater benefit to readers who rely solely on mail order, as they can only judge the quality of a title after purchase.*

Review codes: *Individual titles are judged against all similar comics past and present on a* ***1*** *to* ***10*** *basis, while a comparison is made against previous issues of the same title, ranging from <---> to <+++>. Hence, a quality comic may score an 8 against all others, but have slid from a previous issue's 9, denoted by <->. No change is marked <=>. We do not compare* ***Bone*** *with* ***X-Men****, but review each within their genre.*

Review panel: *Sam Ashurst (SA), Marco Antony (MA), Chris D. Bowen (CDB), Jules Boyle (JB), Chris E. Bunting (CEB), Jon Edwards (JE), Kelvin Green (KG), David Knight (DK), Scott Montgomery (SM), Ian Murphy (IM), Lee Nelson (LN), Rob Nott (RN), Terence Stewart (TS), Mat Thomas (MT), Alex Thompson (MAT)*

Dark Horse

Drawing on your Nightmares

by various

Dark Horse celebrates the success of its horror line with this anthology highlighting the titles. Ben Templesmith's distinctively murky artwork may shine from his and Steve Niles's *Cal McDonald* strip, but its premise – the hardened detective dealing with the undead – is hardly original. Dark Horse deserves praise for bringing Eric Powell's previously self-published *The Goon* to a wider audience. Its unsubtle blend of B-movie horror and *Tex Avery* humour with a dash of bad taste harks back to the best of the EC days. The final strip, a *Buffy* tie-in, looks at Joss Whedon's world from the other point of view. Brett Matthews scripts how a vampire gets double-crossed by a lady in red, with some evocative pencil art by Sean Phillips. (MAT) 7

Super Manga Blast! 35

by various

<=> With competition coming from two major manga anthologies, it's good to see SMB! still holds up well. Pulling the cream of strips from the recent decade, it covers a range of genres, from mystic fantasy adventure and sci-fi to feline comedy. The humour of Makoto Kobayashi is obviously popular with the editors; both his *Club9* and *What's Michael?* are inside. The popular Masamune Shirow's highly detailed techie designs continue to impress in his *Hypernotes*. Also noteworthy is the exquisite *Shadow Star* about a young girl and her morphing star creature. Unfortunately the same strips have been running since the start of publication, and with some starting to drag on somewhat this is a concern. (MAT) 7

DC Comics

Avengers/JLA 2

by Busiek & Perez; DC/Marvel

<++> This miniseries has found its feet! Captain America and Batman call a truce, while their teammates battle it out for objects of power. Kurt Busiek does a wonderful job of comparing the two universes: Marvel Earth is smaller, hence Metropolis and Gotham don't fit; and Quicksilver attempts to access the Speed Force on DC Earth, while his sister is overwhelmed by the chaos magic there. (DK) 7

<+> Reminiscent of the old Avengers/Defenders clashes, the teams face off, in twos and threes, before a final, climactic, set-to in which one of the most powerful team members is – in a Secret Wars echo – mercilessly and brutally punched out. The 'cliffhanger' suggests the forces joining, and Busiek's writing does well to keep solid elements of personality in the script. George Perez's art (again) rarely looks as fabulous inside as on the cover, but it's still more than adequate. (IM) 8

<=> Sheer unbridled nostalgia. It's like the last 20 years of comicbook publishing never happened. JLA/Avengers is precisely the sort of technicolour bombastic slugfest that you loved as a kid (if you're old enough to have bought *Teenage Kicks* by the Undertones when it first came out, that is). Once upon a time this kind of thing was as good as comics got, and if you were brought up on Avengers 153 to 200 this will bring back fond memories of a time when WH Smiths still sold American comics. Younger comics fans may not appreciate it quite as much though. (RN) 7

<=> Part two of this by-the-numbers crossover. After each mistaking the other team for villains in the first part, we now have the inevitable fight between protagonists which ends with the realisation that they've been set up! Perez's art is clear, if a little uninspired, but Busiek's formulaic writing is a massive disappointment. There must be a stifling effect from having to satisfy two companies that their premier teams aren't being badly represented (the fight scenes' wins and losses are carefully balanced so that no-one actually comes out ahead), but considering the infinite possibility of such a gargantuan crossover one can't help but be disappointed by this generic pap. (MT) 4

<=> The 'comics event of the year' continues as the two opposing teams clash in their search for more cosmic items while Batman and Captain America bond over fallen sidekicks. This intercompany crossover seems little more than an excuse to include every hero, villain and obscure mystic artefact Busiek's fanboy-ish encyclopaedic memory can muster. The question of who would win a fight between Thor and Superman may be answered, but this does not constitute an interesting or original storyline. Fortunately the title's saving grace is Perez's clear and expertly rendered art, assisted in no small way by Tom Smith's smooth colours. (MAT) 7

Batman: City of Light 1

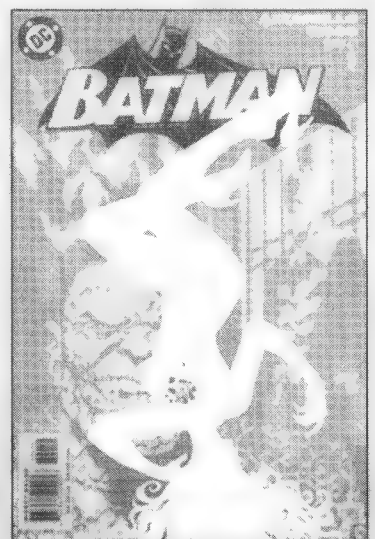
by Pander + Paniccia & Pander + Lopez

Batman's *Crisis of Confidence* plot is flatly devoid of interest and I see no reason to revisit this mess of a title. Janice Chiang's stylish lettering helped define Quasar a decade ago; it's great to see she's still working, but her finesse jars with the scratched but amateurish, cartoony artwork. Worse than The Defenders ever was: talented creators are on board, but their skills clash and diminish each other's efforts rather than invigorate. (IM) 4

Batman 620

by Azzarello & Risso

<++> When Elizabeth Lupo is found murdered – her body brutalised – Batman sets out to find out who killed her. And why. From the opening pages it's clear that we've left Jim Lee's fantastical version of Batman's world, and we're back on the mean streets of Gotham City. After the monumentally disappointing *Hush* series, it's nice to see the Dark Knight doing what he does best – detective work. Lee and Jeph Loeb's run reminded me of Joel Schumacher's Batman movies. With Brian Azzarello and Eduardo Risso in charge it's like Tim Burton never left. (SA) 8



<=> The 100 Bullets team resurrects Batman as a homicide detective. The all-too-familiar plot is neatly scripted, but compels Risso's mostly dour (but occasionally badly comic) art to generate mood, tone and plot vigour. Patricia Mulvihill's layered arch colours ignite to give dynamics and presence to both script and art – without her this could be modestly readable; with her brutish colours it has that extra something and minimises the disappointment following the departure of the previous creative team. (IM) 6

<++> Batman tries to find the man who may have had his own sister killed and partially eaten by Killer Croc, but ends up dooming the life of a young boy in much the same manner of his own. The 100 Bullets team explodes onto Batman with a vengeance, with a stylish darkness and mystery that were sorely lacking from the previous team's two-dimensional effort. Azzarello's PI-style Batman is effortlessly charismatic, and the art, from Johnson's retro cover to Risso's dark and sultry shadows, is of the highest calibre. Now, THIS is how a detective comic should be. (MT) 9

Caper 1

by Winick & Dalrymple

When young boys Jacob and Isadore brutally avenge their father's murder in broad daylight, local mobster Boss Cohen takes them under his wing. 12 years later they're his top enforcers, but what do they do when Cohen starts playing power games that result in the wasteful deaths of their friends? Judd Winick turns in a masterful 1900s crime script, devoid of the chatshow dialogue and trendy coffee shop-isms that have characterised his rather weak work of the last couple of years. But it's indie star Farel Dalrymple who really shines here; his timelessly elegant linework is a joy to behold. Good effort! (MT) 8

Catwoman 23

by Brubaker & Davis + Stewart

<-> An entertaining diversion, at best, fondly recalling Catwoman's strong-arm days. Although well-scripted, this does nothing to further the real plot, thus frustrating the long-suffering reader. Lee Loughridge's adaptable and tensile colouring does most to add sensation and feeling to the comic, but we've (rightly) come to expect more from Ed Brubaker's plotting. (IM) 5

Empire 4

by Waid + Kitson

<+> So far, this series has been an exceptional rollercoaster. Mark Waid and Barry Kitson have created a thoroughly stimulating scenario examining what would happen if one of those megalomaniac villains ever achieved their goal of world domination. Though all the main players are absolutely despicable and just plain nasty, one can't help but be enthralled by their antics. What's more, as this issue proves, none of them are indispensable. Good stuff. (TS) 8

Hellblazer 189

by Carey & Frusin; Vertigo

<=> Mike Carey's new five-parter is classic Constantine – all dark shadows, witty one-liners and generous nods to previous continuity. It is immensely refreshing to find a writer who's unafraid to refer to a title's back-story rather than clear the ground and begin again from year dot. Carey is obviously a JC fan and he's giving us a heady mix of urban gothic magic and realistic characterisation. (RN) 9

Human Target 3

by Milligan & Pulido; Vertigo

<++> Foley challenges Matthews, who faked death on 9/11, to face up to his previous life. Instead he shows what a nasty, pathetic, selfish coward he is. Peter Milligan's script mostly rings true, psychologically, conjuring several moving sequences, powerfully drawn by Javier Pulido, whose style and talent continues to impress; and which lift this above its origins as an unchallenging crime story. (IM) 8

JLA 87

by Kelley & Mahnke + Nguyen

<=> Joe Kelley invents a good deal more

background to 'explain' the Martian Manhunter's historic aversion to flame. Kelley's vision of the Justice League grows ever more bleak, as Fernus subjects the Leaguers to one extreme torture after another. It's gripping stuff, and has been well worth the title going fortnightly. (DK) 7

JLA 88

by Kelley & Mahnke + Nguyen

<-> Part 5 of *Trial by Fire* comes close to over-egging the pudding with both the drawn-out subplot of motivating Plastic Man out of retirement, and the League's efforts to intercept armed nuclear warheads. Despitre not being a very original plot device, the creative team keeps the tension going up to the suspenseful cliffhanger. (DK) 6

JLA 89

by Kelley & Mahnke + Nguyen

<=> In the grand finale to this intriguing saga, a bona fide nuclear strike gives most Leaguers their moment to shine; and none more so than the Flash and Plastic Man. Batman, however, must stand and await the outcome; while Superman sanctions terminal force against a former ally. It's a respectable ending that doesn't let down the previous five chapters. (DK) 6

The Legion 25

by Abnett + Lanning & various

<=> It's 45 years of The Legion, so any excuse for an anniversary issue, yes? Unfortunately, this isn't much of one. Instead of a story, Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning opt for a series of subplots drawn by their various collaborators, but only two really shine: Eric Wright draws and colours a lovely three pager that captures the naïve early years of The Legion, and Paul Rivoche's deceptively simple style effortlessly evokes Element Lad's sad story. Dave Cockrum, a seminal Legion artist, has sadly seen better days, while the work of Harris and Feister is too darn clever for its own good. Regular artist Chris Batista still suffers from some rather pedestrian character work and storytelling. Some of the subplots are intriguing, and if you're a Legion fan, you'll be interested in following them. Otherwise, it's not a particularly satisfying read. (TS) 6

The Losers 5

by Diggle & Jock; Vertigo

<=>Vertigo's post-modern A-Team manages to get itself out of yet another sticky situation, taking hostage an MOAB fuel-air bomb just as another crooked CIA suit arrives on the scene. Jock's messed-up art stylishly captures the high-octane action of Andy Diggle's scripts, which are probably more traditional than their cool veneer suggests, as the end of issue cliffhangers attest. (MAT) 8

Nightwing 86

by Grayson & Zircher + Owens + Parsons

<+> The cover shows it all. This is full-on, filter free fun. Patrick Zircher gives Dick his zing back, although Barbara Gordon doesn't look too pleased about that! (CDB) 6

100 Bullets 47

by Azzarello & Risso; Vertigo

Remember Jack Daw – the fucked-up, badass, psychopathic junkie (based on cult wrestler Raven) from issues 21 and 22? The dirty bastard's back, scuzzier than ever, brandishing the gun Agent Graves gave him. How many of those 100 untraceable bullets does he have left? And what revelations about himself can a close encounter with a caged tiger gave him? Every well-chosen word and brushstroke conjures a dark, dirty and menacing atmosphere. Definitely more jungle than zoo. The only criticism would be the deterioration of Dave Johnson's covers of late – this issue's is just ghastly. (MA) 8

Planetary 17

by Ellis & Cassaday + Martin; WildStorm

<=> Is that a lesser-spotted Warren Ellis-scripted issue I see before me? Indeed, it is! Observe closely Ellis's ability to mimic the themes and ideas of pulp fiction and heroic lore, while adding his own spin to his expanding creation. Witness its attractive, finely rendered panels, unmistakably crafted by John Cassaday. A very rare find indeed, but not as uncommon as the near-extinct Kevin Smith book! (MAT) 7

Sleeper 9

by Brubaker + Phillips; WildStorm

<=> Holden Carver searches for the file that will reveal him as an enemy agent – with the man who suspects him most watching over his shoulder. Sleeper is structured like a TV series: each issue is like an episode that takes place within the main arc of the season. Which means that you can jump on at any point... so please do! In another great issue, you side with the bad guys when the superhero shows up. That's got to be worth a look, surely? (SA) 9

Sleeper 10

by Brubaker + Phillips; WildStorm

<=> Tao sends Holden, Genocide and Miss Misery on a deadly mission – and one of them won't make it back alive. When a comic makes you go straight back to the first page after hitting the last, just to enjoy it all over again, you know you're onto a winner. This issue has everything – Genocide's origin story being just one of the highlights. The art is truly cinematic, with movement so good that reading Sleeper often feels like watching an animated series. Pick this up, but save it for when you've read the first nine. You'll thank me. (SA) 9

Smax 3

by Moore & Cannon; America's Best Comics

<=> Robyn manages to convince an obstinate Jeff to follow his destiny and go on the quest to avenge his past. But, as their visit to the Department of Quests, Trilogies and Sagas quickly shows, things aren't quite so simple in fantasy land as J.R.R. Tolkien made out. Zander Cannon's art may not be as densely executed as Gene Ha's work on Top 10 , but he still manages to fill the pages with Alan Moore's knowing references to fantasy literature for this more light-hearted miniseries. (MAT) 7

Stormwatch: Team Achilles 16

by Wright & Smith + Nguyen; WildStorm

<=> Things get serious as Citizen Soldier escalates his war against the US administration, plaguing the country with his incriminating memories in their dreams and sending superpowered individuals to reek havoc. Cue the UN-sanctioned antihero team Stormwatch. Micah Ian Wright's righteously cynical take on the present US executive gives this title its bite, making it far more than another post-Authority widescreen action comic. C.P. Smith's clearly wrought pages and Michael Golden's colourful covers similarly help it stand out from the crowd. (MAT) 7

Terra Obscura 4

by Moore & Hogan + Paquette + Story; America's Best Comics

With so many characters spread so thinly over a complex story, only skeletal psychopath The Terror has made the leap from monochrome to Technicolor. The story's ramping up excitingly, and the whole thing looks terrific. Penciller Yanick Paquette has a real eye for the ladies – his pouting, billowing women are all heaving bosoms and massive hair – and Story's inks give a Kevin Nowlan burnish. (MA) 8

Thundercats: Dogs of War 5

by Layman & Booth + Prado; WildStorm

<=> John Layman may have been hacking it out a little with this daft cats-versus-dogs mini – with its inevitable inconsequential battle and reconciling conclusion, and general hamming up of Mumm-Ra's dialogue – but at least he can be forgiven for leaving Snarf at the margins of the book. Likewise, Joe Prado may have been called in again to supplement Brett Booth's flagging page rate, but that's forgivable if it allows Booth to draw these anthropomorphic heroes. (MAT) 5

Wonder Woman 196

by Rucka + Johnson

<=> Perhaps in an effort to prove that the pen really is mightier than the sword, Wonder Woman publishes a book of her essays and pious thoughts. The local chapter of a kids WW club gets closed down as a result, and some Machiavellian scheming is undertaken to discredit Diana through her words. As if. It won't set any hearts racing with pulse-pounding action, but Greg Rucka's deft words and Drew Johnson's improving pencils are a start in the right direction. (TS) 7

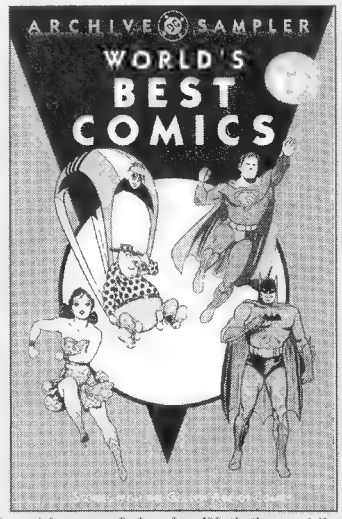
Wonder Woman 197

by Rucka + Johnson

<-> Madame Ambassador, after risking

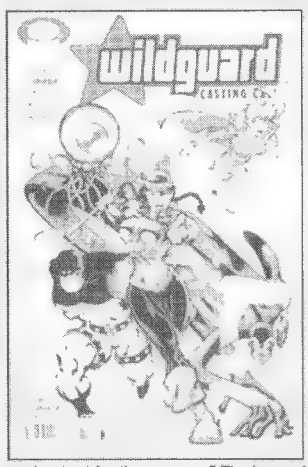
World's Best Comics

by various



Close, but no cigar. As opposed to the hefty Archive volumes, this looked like an inexpensive window on much-heralded but virtually unobtainable classics. Yet bizarrely, instead of excusing some of the hocum by at least acknowledging with a simple text line that the otherwise meaningless reprints were from the year dot, DC chooses to tell us which reprint volume they *also* appear in. ("Gosh, I thought that Wonder Woman story was so trite, I'll seek out the more expensive version and read it again!" Not.) (TM) 4

DC attempts to promote its expensive archival series with this sampler comic reproducing a variety of 'classic' strips. The hokey Superman versus unscrupulous building contractors, and juvenile Batman against an offshore betting ship were obviously of their time, while Wonder Woman's crudely rendered fight against male oppression would hardly inspire feminist uprising. The sheer crazed lunacy of Jack Cole's Plastic Man clearly stands out from the pack (the immortal brain of a 16th-century mad scientist in the body of a paralysed war veteran anyone?), but DC's decision to include no biographical details with the strips further diminishes the worth of this title and the series. (MAT) 5



Wildguard: Casting Call 1

by Nauck & Stucker

This surely had to happen: a superhero spoof of the *Pop Idol* formula. Todd Nauck's scripting is flawless, and together with inker Larry Stucker, he does a bang-up job on the art, too. The Wildguard auditions assemble a fantastic assortment of improbable youngsters, and every reader must have their favourites among them. This comic's heroes have just arrived fully formed: explanatory 'origin stories' can wait. (DK) 8

Wildguard: Casting Call 2

by Nauck & Stucker

<=> The auditions are attacked by a hi-tech army; but is it for real, or just an initiative test and a stunt for the cameras? The heroes' capabilities are revealed in brief glimpses amid the fast and furious fun. The interactive dimension is a bonus too: it's a must to check out the Wildguard website, where readers can vote for the fifth team member. (DK) 8

repetitive strain injury during yet another book signing, has a friendly little chat with an agitated Bluebird, then rushes to the scene of a forest fire, presumably to save all of his friends. But, once there she doesn't do much of anything, apart from convince The Flash that it is best just to protect property. How ironic that this issue was released the same month that vast acres of California were devastated by wild fires. It's competently written, and adequately drawn, but just a tad worthy and dull. (TS) 6

Image

The Agents 6

by Gunstone & Dunn

<=> As Pippa deals with a traitor in the ranks, and the C.A.B.A.L. is defeated, Cord makes some interesting decisions regarding his future. The art and writing feel a little rushed in this final issue, but Ben Dunn and Kevin Gunstone bring things to a very interesting and cleverly topical conclusion. A very intelligent series. It's sad to see it end. (KG) 8

Capes 1

by Kirkman & Englert

An original slant on the paid superhero team, as we see Bolt and a host of costumed characters working shifts and clocking on. Kid Thor is a likeable sidekick, with a back-story that provides visual references to Savage Dragon's universe. While Mark Englert's art slavishly imitates that of Erik Larsen, that's no bad thing. If you're picking up Wildguard, give this a try too. (DK) 7

Micronauts 11

by Jolley & Kurth + Schulz

<=> This odd-numbered wrap-up issue abruptly curtails the Micronauts' battle against Karza's invasion of Earth. There's a resolution of sorts, but what now becomes of Archer and his crew we will have to wait and see. The eventual answer, it seems, will lie with another publisher. (DK) 6

Street Fighter 2 #1

by Siu-Chong & various

<=> Admittedly this is a completely daft series, but translating the seat-of-your-pants interactive videogame action of the Streetfighter series into a readable comic can't be easy. Yes, Capcom developed storylines for all the characters, but these weren't to be taken quite so seriously nor stand in their own right. Fortunately UDON's brilliantly coloured artwork has the likenesses to a T. But more fun is had from the guest-illustrated back-up (with Adam Warren screening Chun-Li and Cammy's first slapfest) and *Cheapshots!*, the gag page. (MAT) 6

The Walking Dead 1

by Kirkman & Moore

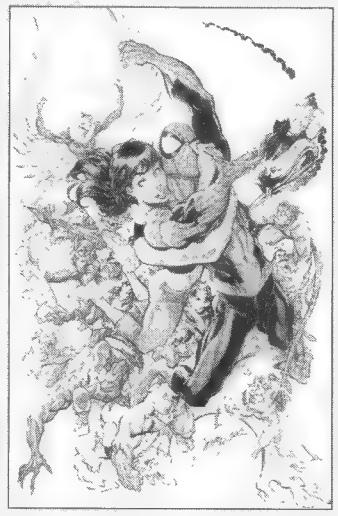
While Dark Horse is busy promoting its horror line, Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore produce for Image this little homage to misspent youth watching zombie flicks. Officer Rick Grimes wakes up from a coma to find his small town overrun with the living dead and only a few survivors holding onto normality. Kirkman manages to set his story up more along the lines of a survival adventure than a visceral shoot-'em up; while Moore's rough-edged grey-toned art perfectly captures the post-apocalyptic horror. (MAT) 8

Amazing Spider-Man 500

by Straczynski & Romita Jr + Romita Sr + Hanna

<+> Spidey is bounced through his own lifetime, in an effort to change history. Plotwise, there's not a great deal going on here, and the whole idea of Peter becoming more comfortable as a hero by seeing how many lives he's touched is a little cheesy, but it's done fairly well. I'm not sure how wise an idea the bit with Uncle Ben is, but as a lifelong Spidey fan, it gave me goosebumps. John Romita Sr's art doesn't take well to Scott Hanna's inks, unfortunately. (KG) 9

<+> It's the dreaded big anniversary issue, and surprisingly we're given a retrospective of Spider-Man's career. But the really big surprise is that it's thoroughly enjoyable! J. Michael Straczynski took one of comics' greatest clichés and incorporated it right into an already nifty story, and by golly it worked. Sentimental but not cloying, fast-paced, entertaining and action-packed, this is what a Spider-Man comic should be. And with some tasty art by John Romita Jr, as well as a couple of pages by Romita Sr, it's certainly pretty looking. (MT) 8



<=> Spidey gets thrown across his past and future in an attempt to get back to the present and make up for his colleague's fatal mistake, thereby giving Romita Jr the perfect opportunity to reinterpret the webbed wonder's classic encounters for this big-number special. Even Romita Sr pops by, delivering a schmaltzy reunion epilogue. Straczynski finally delivers with this arc, placing Spidey amongst his pantheon of villains and capturing Peter's determined resolve to carry on irrespective; but do we really need to see him lifting giant weights again? (MAT) 7

Marvel

Alias 28

by Bendis & Gaydos; MAX Comics

<=> The final issue of Alias doesn't disappoint. Brian Michael Bendis delivers a satisfying character resolution and wraps up a number of plot strands in readiness for the next chapter of Jessica's life in new title The Pulse. Alias has is one of the best comics Marvel has ever published. Whether The Pulse will match this remains to be seen. I only hope that BMB hasn't split up The Beatles in order to form Wings. (RN) 9

<+> Jessica's latest episode with the amorally sadistic Purple Man comes to a final conclusion, and this combined with a massive shock in her personal life leads us to the end of Alias, and the impending beginning of the non-18+ The Pulse. This was an absolutely cracking series, and Bendis and Michael Gaydos handle its ending masterfully, leaving the reader a lot more optimistic about the character's continuing 'adventures' not being a pile of juvenile rubbish. Good show, fellas. (MT) 9

Avengers 71

by Johns & Sadowski + Currie

<+> Aw, c'mon Jan, why didn't you say 'yes'? Looks like fans will have to wait to see Jan and Hank re-tie the knot. Geoff Johns serves up a hot dish, touching on one or two comics taboos with the right blend of sauce and spice. Steve Sadowski faces an uphill struggle once you get past that cool, cool cover. (CDB) 5

<=> This has it all: dimwitted writing, ugly art, scrappy inter-panel continuity, inconsistent characterisation and (snigger) superhero sex! This is awful; how Marvel thought this mess was worth publishing is beyond me. (KG) 1

<=> Beyond the bizarre controversy of the implied nooky in the few first pages, Johns' latest one-off issue focuses on Wasp and Yellowjacket's troubled partnership, with the obligatory villain in the form of Whirlwind. Johns manages to get to the heart of the couple's relationship, while including some pointless (lack of) spandex fighting. After the success of The Ultimates, it's questionable that Sadowski and Andrew Currie's art isn't meant to ape Bryan Hitch's seminal work: even Wasp's hairdo is the same! (MAT) 7

Avengers 72

by Johns & Kolins

<+> The team tracks down the missing She-Hulk, but is overconfident and pays for its mistake. The writing is a little improved, but Geoff Johns' take on She-Hulk is rather idiotic, somewhat pretentious, and misses the point of the character by a mile. Scott Kolins takes up the art chores amid a swirl of publicity, but turns in a rather grotesque job. (KG) 3

<=> After the tragic incident in the Red Zone storyline, Jennifer Walters, aka She-Hulk, goes on the run, pursued by her teammates who are eager to build bridges. Johns is joined by his critically acclaimed creative partner on DC's Flash , Kolins, who provides his usual high standard of clear, yet quirky-lined art, aided by Chris Sotomayor's bright digital colouring. You'll be glad to hear Jennifer's modesty is spared by the same predilection as her cousin has to expanding purple underwear. (MAT) 7

Captain America 19

by Gibbons & Weeks + Palmer

<+> Hidden beneath a stunning cover by Gene Ha lies a tale of a twisted Marvel reality where the Red Skull reigns and Marvel heroes are a non-superpowered resistance. Longtime fans will love this, while newer converts will get a fresh slice of what made Marvel great, those many years ago. (CDB)8

<=> This is truly awful. Dave Gibbons isn't a writer and this embarrassingly poor storyline, which sees a frozen Cap waking up in a Nazi-run world, is evidence of that. Reminiscent of a second-rate 'What If..?' tale from the bad old days of '80s Marvel, the uninspired writing is matched only by the pencil-by-numbers art. Whoever commissioned this wasn't doing his job properly. (RN) 4

Captain Marvel 14

by David & Ryan + Sotomayor

<=> Cap and Rick come face to face with past versions of themselves. This provides them both with their ultimate wish: Rick, to stop his past actions, and Cap, to stop his future ones. Despite such drama, Peter David finds time to write in some classic comedy moments. The art is by Michael Ryan, meaning that this remains Marvel's mightiest. (CEB) 9

Captain Marvel 15

by David & Azaceta + Sotomayor

<+> Ooh, Genis got in trouble. Now mommy's gonna smack his backside. You've heard all the clichés, you've read all the gushing reviews. But believe me, there is no false or unjust hype. This simply is the cake-and-eat-it title you didn't think could be done. Funny, insightful, strangely continuity heavy and lite at the same time. And through all the art changes Chris Sotomayor keeps a reassuring consistency to his credit. (CDB)8

Daredevil 53

by Mack; Marvel Knights

<-> David Mack's breathtaking painted and patched artwork, for whom colour has a dynamic, narrative flourish, is an immeasurable joy: this run comprises some of his best ever comics art. Maya goes on a dream quest. The slow-burning plot nearly irritates: even the most glorious art struggles to hold interest when the plot falters. This plot is not that deficient, but such beautiful art needs more meat in its story (despite a well-narrated script) to devastate. (IM) 7

<-> Mack's return to DD and his character Echo continues to be as visually striking yet glaringly pretentious as ever. The deaf American Indian embarks on a spirit quest to reassess her life following Kingpin's betrayal of her trust and Matt's rejection. Mack has obviously done his research on Indian culture and invests a lot of emotion into the character, but then spoils it all by including a gratuitous Wolverine guest appearance. This jars with the artistic aspirations of the moody collage of images that grace his beautiful pages. (MAT) 7

Elektra 28

by Rodi & Chen + Florea

<+> Elektra doesn't like being fired, as her employers discover over dinner. For a moment I thought I was reading the Punisher. Rob Rodi gives Garth Ennis the jitters with a delectably demented script. If one Punisher book a month isn't enough, give Elektra a look-in, she slaughters the competition. (CDB) 6

Exiles 36

by Winick & Sakakibara + Faucher

<--> The dimension-hopping Exiles run into a parallel Fantastic Four origin and have to help Ben Grimm's teammates restrain him when he turns into an insane monster. Judd Winick's story is good and imaginative, even if his scripting is still too cringingly over-emotional, but the real problem with this issue is the terrible art. Apart from being as bland as those computer-rendered Ultimate X-Men images that Marvel slaps all over its

merchandise these days, the art is terribly amateurish. Sasquatch berates the Thing for not wearing anything, but he's drawn with brown shorts on, and later, when an insectoid Brood egg hatches within someone all that happens is that their skin turns green – terrifying! A nice issue, rendered by incompetents... (MT) 3

Fantastic Four 504

by Waid & Porter + Rapmund

<=> Reed shows that he's still the man-with-a-plan, as Doctor Doom is shown to be as dangerous dead as alive. Reed's so fed up with it all, he can't even be bothered to see the amusing side of comicbook sensationalism: "He'll be back. Why pretend?" So the 'Four get pre-emptive. Writer Mark Waid has turned this title from mediocre to magnificent. If only his return is as inevitable as the Doctor's. (CEB) 8

Iron Man 73

by Miller & Lucas

<+> Tony Stark discovers his inventions are being exploited via a loophole by a ruthless Under-Secretary. New writer John J. Miller dives in and gets his hands dirty with a genuine "bold new direction" while artist Jorge Lucas puts the shine back into Iron Man's armour. And it's good! (CDB) 7

<+> Tony Stark is outmanoeuvred by a politician even more ruthless than he is. New writer Miller has given some thought to his approach to this title, and his real-world perspective is more palatable than the sappy nonsense found within these pages of late. Lucas's detailed work is also welcome on a book deprived of artistic stability. (LN) 6

Marvel 1602 #3

by Gaiman & Kubert
+ Isanove; Marvel Knights

<=> Nick Fury tries to foil Count Doom's plot, while Inquisitor Magneto attracts too much interest from the Pope. Writer Neil Gaiman is excellent at weaving in the many religious tensions of the politics of the time, and builds a growing sense of threatening intrigue and excitement. Ably abetted by Andy Kubert's careful linework and the polished, murky finish applied by Richard Isanove, 1602 continues to grow. (IM) 8

<=> Owing more than just a passing influence to Michael Moorcock's seminal work, *Gloriana*, Gaiman envisages court intrigue and religious bigotry during the age of enlightenment. The problem with epic projects like this is that the author has a tendency to cram in as much as possible and before long the book becomes an exercise in name dropping, with cameo appearances for their own sake. This shows signs of over ambition and suffers too from inappropriate artwork and garish colour tones. (RN) 6

<=> A dull, pompous and lacklustre load of twaddle for the too-cool-for-school kids. Step back in amazement as some overly familiar Marvel faces wander around in Elizabethan drag doing not very much of anything really. No more than a trumped-up 'What If..?', with even an off panel cameo from The Watcher (did you miss it? Don't worry; I'm sure someone will annotate it). I'd recap the plot, but my mind wanders so much while reading this that I've twice imagined fully redecorating the bathroom. Buy it, if you must, for the rather fun covers. (TS) 3

Mystique 7

by Vaughan & Ryan; Tsunami

<++> Brian K. Vaughan is having fun with Mystique's shape-changing powers, and while some uses are more ludicrous than others (here seen posing as part of a famous statue – what happens to the real statue parts while she imitates them?) they add an extra layer of enjoyment to the otherwise moderately entertaining – and adequately characterised – espionage plots. Michael Ryan's art has depth and visibility, but he seems to have forgotten Forge's ethnicity. However, the letters page launch is cause for celebration. (IM) 6

Hawkeye 1

by Nicieza & Raffaele

Hawkeye takes to the road, discovering trouble easier to find than good dress sense. Fabian Nicieza used this formula on a little lost gem in the '90s called Nomad. Sadly, Clint needs the spandex to identify with. The whole jackboots and hunting jacket vigilante doesn't cut it here. The art? Again, forgettable in today's high-level market. More books have raised their game, Hawkeye just doesn't hit the target this time. (CDB) 3

A cocksure ex-superhero travels America to right wrongs and protect the innocent. This description could also be applied to Nicieza's old Nomad work, but this is more than a mere rehash. Writing for a more mature audience, Nicieza is helped considerably in his task by the harsh hues applied to Stefano Raffaele's rough linework, creating suitably seedy settings. (LN) 6

New X-Men 147

by Morrison & Jimenez + Lanning

<-> Boosted by Kick, Magneto rules over a shattered New York. All of his wishes seem to have come true – but is everything as it seems? After last issue's masterful revelations this felt like it had moved on a bit too much – but I get the feeling that Grant Morrison may yet reveal the events between #146 and #147. 'All in one day' indeed. (SA) 7

<=> The return of Magneto was most unexpected. Now he and Esme lead an assortment of misfits from Xavier's school as a first step on the road to world domination, with Toad as first lieutenant. Magneto sure is a character given to speech-making; but there are also some magnificent double-page spreads of his devastating vengeance. (DK) 7

<--> Magneto tears New York apart – unhindered by the M.I.A. X-Men or any local hero – but there are mutterings amongst his new brotherhood, Xavier's 'remedial' class. Phil Jimenez's pencils, enhanced by Andy Lanning but smothered and oppressed by Chris Chuckry's overpowering, boorish colours, do their best to illustrate such lethal destruction, but struggle to convince. Morrison's plot is infuriatingly slow to deliver – holding back for a climax in #150? – but his scripting still delivers wry lines and surprises. (IM) 6

<-> Magneto's back (again), and – crazed on drugs – he's destroying New York and enslaving the humans, after apparently disposing of the X-Men. But if you take away the drug angle and the hip rhetoric this could be any one of 50 X-issues of the past 20 years, with only about four pages worth of actual narrative. It's almost scary how quickly an amazing comic like New X-Men can lose its way. It's as if Morrison has taken the 'poor man's Morrison' label from Mark Millar for himself. Bring back the 'rich man's Morrison', that's what I say! (MT) 5

<+> After the shock revelation of last issue Magneto begins his unrestrained campaign to rid the world of the 'human problem', with the X-Men left decimated and Xavier powerless to act. Morrison manages to make the X-villain's return a genuine surprise, making the overused character a deadly threat once more. Jimenez's clear linework and realistic style is a welcome relief after recent issues, as he manages to capture the spectacle of Morrison's script. (MAT) 8

New X-Men 148

by Morrison & Jiminez + Lanning

<++> Magneto reveals his master plan to an incapacitated Xavier, while Jean Grey and Wolverine are stuck on Asteroid M – heading straight for the sun. This is an incredible issue of a fantastic series. Reflective, moving and shocking – the scenes with Wolverine and Jean Grey will leave you with your jaw hanging open. Grant Morrison is certainly going out in style. The only question is, how does he follow this one? Personally, I think the clues are in the conversations between Logan and Jean. Oh, and in Wolverine's right eye. Look closely. (SA) 9

<--> It's not unfair to say that not much happens this issue, and the very little violence that takes place is definitely unwarranted. Wolverine and Jean Grey spend their last hours alive together on Asteroid M, but not in the way most of us would. And Beast gets the cover to himself despite not appearing in the story! (DK) 5

<+> When top villains like Magneto tear Manhattan apart and sideline the X-Men – Wolverine and Jean spend 15 pages 'dying' – the merits of crossovers becomes clear: where are the Avengers, Dr Strange and friends when all this is going on? Morrison's plot frustrates and crawls, leavened by a flowing, tense script and Phil Jimenez's deceptively human, delectably lined pencils. Andy Lanning's inks are the epitome of emphasis; add Chris Chuckry's in-tune colours to make impressive, memorable art that trumps laborious plotting. (IM) 7

<=> The Beast straddles the cover, but is strangely nowhere to be seen within, as Morrison's X-Men vs Magneto storyline reaches midway point. After the shock of recent revelations, Morrison manages to suspend disbelief at the sheer size of events, while managing to get to the emotional core of the characters. Jimenez's sharp linework finely depicts these moments before zooming out to their full cinematic scale. (MAT) 8

Paradise X: X

by Krueger & Braithwaite + Reinhold

Definitely one for enthusiasts only. Reed Richards suspects that the Paradise has been a Kree trap all along, but Mar-vell explains it all to him: the Paradise is a wall to protect the living and the dead, impenetrable to those its Watchman decides to keep out. At least that's what I understood it all to mean. (DK) 5

The Punisher 33

by Ennis & McCrea + Miki;
Marvel Knights

<+> The Punisher goes on a rampage searching for the location of a mysterious 'auction,' meanwhile Daredevil, Spider-Man and Wolverine team up to take him down. The final arc of Garth Ennis's Looney Tunes Punisher – before he moves onto a more serious MAX Comics series – has a good opening, with some equally funny and disturbing moments. Although I'm not too sure about Frank's cure for drug addiction. One question: has Spacker Dave been hanging out with Arseface? You betcha! (SA) 7

Runaways 7

by Vaughan & Alphona
+ Young; Tsunami

<+> When the gang shop, they inevitably walk in on a robbery – but so little plot is compensated for by a growing sense of character and team. Adrian Alphona's pencilling is (sometimes) sweetly laid-back, which Brian Reber's muted colours recognise and define, but Brian K. Vaughan's plotting will need to find a more sure direction if this likeable title is to sustain. (IM) 6

Sentinel 6

by McKeever & Vriens
+ UDON; Tsunami

<=> Juston Seyfert – anyone else hate that name? – sends his 'pet' Sentinel to attack the school so he can 'heroically' save the day. The reliably emotive art is excellent at ascribing feelings to faces and dynamic in the action scenes, granting this book delectably accessible visuals. And while the plotting is lacking in subtlety the characterisation has sufficient nuances to maintain interest. (IM) 6

Sentinel 7

by McKeever & Vriens + Heilig
+ Hepurn + Vedder; Tsunami

<+> Juston doesn't feel like the hero everyone thinks he is, so he secretly rescues a driver from a car-wreck. Mainly dealing with the ramifications of recent events for Juston, his family and his friends, this low-key issue highlights the strengths of Sean McKeever's scripting and his well-developed characters, which the team-working pencils and inks conduct into a convincing personal, barely superhero-like drama. (IM) 7

Sentinel 8

by McKeever & Vriens + Heilig
+ Hepurn + Vedder; Tsunami

<--> Juston uses his Sentinel to rescue passengers from a crashed aircraft, which the military naturally misinterprets. The script is mediocre, conversations between the passengers predictable and uninteresting, but Sean McKeever's writing of Juston's confusion over how to help is stronger. The UDON studio art is too flat for such a grim, action-led story, but never slips below modest standards. (IM) 6

Supreme Power 4

by Straczynski
& Frank + Sibal; MAX Comics

<-> The government takes drastic action to

make sure that Hyperion pledges his allegiance completely to the US. Meanwhile, Nighthawk hits the streets to dispense some violent justice. Down from last issue's near perfect *All the President's Supermen* tale, this issue's quality is still very high. A lot of people wrote Supreme Power off as just another Rising Stars, but it has one key difference: SP is set in the real world. So we get to see how a real Batman might treat criminals and how a real Superman might be treated by the government – both with shocking results. (SA) 8

<=> Still carefully treading in the deep footprints left by Watchmen, J. Michael Straczynski maps out an alternative world history on the basis that America had a super soldier programme in place during the 1980s. JMS is a good solid writer and, leaving aside the familiarity of the theme, Supreme Power is an enjoyable read, at times capable of coming up with some original twists on a familiar story. (RN) 7

Thor 70

by Jurgens & Eaton + Koblish

<=> The future vision of Asgard on Earth continues to shed glimpses of the suffering endured to reach this point. A relevant criticism of the series would be the duration of this epic. However, Dan Jurgens keeps the twists inventive and refreshing enough to maintain interest. Only time will tell if the fans deem it a classic or a crock. (CDB) 7

Thor: Vikings 4

by Ennis & Fabry; MAX Comics

<=> Thor and Dr Strange prepare their new recruits for war – then take the fight to the vikings. This series feels like a 'best of Garth Ennis' collection, featuring a strong woman in a man's world (Preacher), a psychotic knight (Medieval Spawn), and a heroic fighter pilot (War Stories). Add to that a Hitman-esque sense of humour, and you have a strong contender for the most enjoyable miniseries of the year. Oh, and Ennis writes a Dr Strange that Straczynski could only dream of. (SA) 9

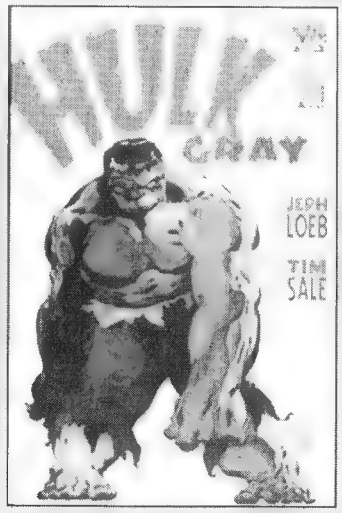
<=> Ennis's knack with sparkling dialogue and Glenn Fabry's graphic way with unspeakable horror make this a majestic masterpiece of merry Marvel mayhem. Writing the Messerschmitt pilot as a wise-arse everyman serves to get in a useful recap that shouldn't be regarded as intrusive; and so what if it is? There are too many reasons why this is good comics to even try to list them all here. (DK) 8

Ultimate Six #3

by Bendis & Hairsine + Miki

<-> The focus shifts from the villains to the heroes as Nick Fury deals with the aftermath of The Sinister not yet Six escape – by bringing in Peter Parker. The comics equivalent of a popcorn flick, Ultimate Six is entertaining, if a little empty. Like a movie spin-off of a TV series, this seems too concerned with bringing newcomers up to speed. The question is: would a newbie to the Ultimate universe really start halfway through a crossover miniseries? Still, this has some lovely art and a killer cliffhanger. (SA) 6

<++> Nick Fury pulls in Spider-Man (Ultimate Peter Parker has never been drawn so convincingly youthful and overawed: Mark Bagley watch out) and organises the Ultimates recovery from last issue's jailbreak. Although action-free, this issue is tensely exhilarating, thanks to Brian Michael Bendis's cautiously robust script, the apprehensive mood enhanced greatly by Trevor Hairsine's scratchy, nervous pencils and Danny Miki's careful inks, finally producing the delights this series promised. (IM) 8



Hulk: Gray 1

by Loeb & Sale; Marvel Knights

Almost every right hand page in the book's a bloody ad, it takes 10 minutes to read a dragged out segment of a story that's been told innumerable times before in a fraction of the pages and it's priced at almost four dollars an issue. Somebody taking the piss here? (TM) 4

The revisionist history of Marvel/DC rumbles on in the hands of Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale, with a retelling of the early grey days of the Hulk. Those familiar with their previous runs on Batman, Spider-Man and Daredevil know what to expect: solid storytelling, good art, and a reverential retelling of the hero's origin and early career, with just the right mix of original ideas to make the story worth rereading. Give it 10 years and we'll have Loeb and Sale moving on to tackle 'Jessica Jones Purple'! (RN) 7

The Hulk gets the 'year one' treatment from Loeb and Sale and, as with Daredevil: Yellow and Spider-Man: Blue, it looks very nice. Sale's never better than when he's doing the Fifties style, which helped bring him and Loeb such acclaim for Batman: Long Halloween, but Loeb's stories for Marvel simply haven't been in the same league. Like the other two minis this uses the same plot device of having the hero narrate his origin and moon over his lost love for six issues. Where Miller and Byrne have retold origins to redefine and update a character, Loeb just makes them seem two-dimensional. But, hey, it looks nice. (MT) 5

This creative team's latest miniseries is once again too late to be a movie cash-in; though the film's audience may be a little confused by the Hulk's grey tones and gawky Banner, never mind the 'hip' teen hanging out with him. Loeb's now trademarked 'tortured voiceover' adds some unwanted insight to events, while Sale's stylish art enhances the story, giving it a retro yet timeless feel. But it is his huge lumbering Hulk that is the real seller, in much the same way as the film, funnily enough. (MAT) 7

Ultimate Spider-Man 46

by Bendis & Bagley + Thibert

<--> Sharon Carter, SHIELD agent, relates Spider-Man's first fight with Sandman, giving background to the new Ultimate Six series. It's a disappointing fill-in story, with minimal narrative thrust and characterisation, but Mark Bagley still produces some memorable spreads and for the first time ever makes Sandman in action look convincingly dangerous and vicious. (IM) 5

Ultimate Spider-Man 47

by Bendis & Bagley + Thibert

<=> The Kingpin makes his presence known and Peter Parker gets fired. While the Kingpin gets enough space to properly establish character, this, and recent plots, feel dragged out. The talented, sclerotic Mark Bagley's pencils provide sparks – and I love his slightly-blurred web-swinging cover – but Brian Michael Bendis ain't delivering the crafty plotting he writes elsewhere. (IM) 5

Ultimate Spider-Man 48

by Bendis & Bagley + Thibert

<+> Peter Parker manages to upset just about everyone except Aunt May when his frustrations with The Kingpin reach boiling point. Meanwhile, just what does J. Jonah Jameson have to hide concerning prospective mayor Sam Bullit? After a couple of weak issues, this is starting to get back on top form. The scenes between Ben Ulrich and Sam Bullit wouldn't look out of place in Transmetropolitan, which can only be a good thing. (SA) 8

<++> An august script (excepting Peter's unlikely social studies teacher) in which the supporting cast takes centre stage, reminding us why Brian Michael Bendis has such a good reputation. Little plot development, but more delightful for that: Aunt May, Peter, Ben Urich, Kingpin and Robbie Robertson all have memorable scenes. Humour, presence and strength – everything last issue lacked – force Mark Bagley's accomplished art back into a supporting role. (IM) 8

Ultimate Spider-Man 49

by Bendis + Bagley + Thibert

<=> Peter Parker and Spider-Man both have confrontations with J. Jonah Jameson, with surprisingly touching results. This made me laugh out loud five times and gave me goose-bumps twice – and if that isn't a recommendation these days I don't know what is. Brian Michael Bendis and Mark Bagley have made me fall in love with Spider-Man again, and I thank them for it. (SA) 8

Uncanny X-Men 431

by Austen & Tan

<=> While Polaris relives her horrific experiences of Genosha's destruction, an apparently random team of X-Men finds itself fighting seemingly demonic hordes led by Nightcrawler's father Azazel in what may be Hell. Philip Tan's artistic strengths include chaotic battle scenes but tighter scripting – despite a classic Chuck Austen exchange between Juggernaut and Northstar – could explain a lot more of what's going on. Inevitably this confusion pushes the reader away, which is disappointing as the plot has the potential to be very good indeed. (IM) 7

Uncanny X-Men 432

by Austen & Tan

<+> Azazel captures the team and claims to be both Nightcrawler's father and Satan incarnate. Juggernaut and Northstar visit Sammy and find his father abusing him. Philip Tan's art can be delectable, with almost gothic detail flourishing in the 'Hell' scenes, but if there is disappointment here, it's Chuck Austen's plot which sees these X-Men so easily beaten, with little explanation. Still a likeable romp, and well illustrated. (IM) 7

Venom 6

by Way
& Medina + Vlasco; Tsunami

<+> Venom continues to kill people willy nilly, the alien guy in the suit continues to try and stop him, the sole survivor continues to whinge unconvincingly about it, and I continue not to really care. This poor excuse for a story, which has been drawn out for at least three issues more than necessary, just goes to show that giving supporting characters and villains their own series is a bad idea – for every Hellblazer or Lucifer you get 200 abortions like Venom or the forthcoming Cable/Deadpool series (call it an inspired guess). Medina's art isn't quite as horribly unclear as the previous issues, but that's scant reason to part with another two quid. (MT) 2

Venom 7

by Way
& Medina + Vlasco; Tsunami

<=> Venom continues to wander about absorbing and killing innocents while a couple of different factions are chasing him just slowly enough to let things drag out for a bit longer. Oh, and Wolverine's in it too. As usual, Sam Kieth's cover art is superb, but the interior is sorely lacking, both in the ridiculously drawn-out story and in the art being caricatured to the point that it has no style or dynamism, just big, big eyes. Poor. (MT) 2

Weapon X #13

by Tieri & Kitson
+ Parsons + Perotta

<+> Marrow apparently rescues Cable and friends, and Neverland's mastermind is revealed (to readers) as a classic X-villain. Frank Tieri's script satisfyingly ties up recent plots and hints at future directions, while the art is greatly improved: Barry Kitson's pencils are generally animated and alluring but Rick Perotta's inking of later pages is shown up by the way Sean Parsons deftly magnifies and develops his pages, rather than casually blocking them in. (IM) 6

Weapon X #14

by Tieri & Leon + Edwards

<++> Mr Sinister's World War II exploits, revealed in flashback, are as unnerving and appalling as might be expected. Tommy Lee Edwards' dark, luxuriously thick inks give John Paul Leon's disturbing pencils extra depth and atmosphere, creating a bleak, claustrophobic mood, icing an enjoyably nasty, vivid standalone issue. There may be life in these pages yet. (IM) 8

Wolverine 6

by Rucka & Robertson + Palmer

<+++> Wolverine meets Nightcrawler in a bar. They discuss their self hatred, guilt, fears and need for acceptance. This sounds trite, but it is a memorable, lengthy conversation, a superior Greg Rucka script, elucidating his interpretation of Wolverine. Darrick

Robertson draws a lanky Nightcrawler, but with Tom Palmer's comforting inks, creates a fetching tableau appropriate to the navel-gazing narrative. (IM) 7

Wolverine 7

by Rucka + Fernandez

<--> Wolverine discovers an illegal immigration plot on the Mexican border, while Cassie Lathrop searches for the location of her mysterious saviour. And it all started so well. Darrick Robertson's issue one art was the Wolverine I grew up with – an ugly midget with a bad attitude. But as this relaunch has progressed, Logan has been getting steadily taller and buffer, leading to this catwalk model version. As for the plot, don't get me started. Doesn't Marvel already publish a Punisher comic? (SA) 4

Wolverine: The End 1

by Jenkins + Castellini + Mounts

Wolverine is getting old, slowing down and talking to himself – kind of like your grandad, but with sharper claws. When a 'friend' passes away, Wolverine leaves his woodland hideaway, and begins a voyage of discovery, which seems to lead back to Weapon X. This is surprisingly enjoyable. It's nice to see a future tale without flying cars and stupid clothes, and it's a brave move to make Wolverine a borderline paranoid schizophrenic. If this carries on in the same vein, we could have a 'Dark Canucklehead Returns' on our hands. (SA) 8

X-Statix 13

by Milligan & Allred + Bone

<+> Princess Diana joins the team, but the British establishment won't allow it and send stereotypical superhero assassins after her. Only not. It's a shame that Marvel backed out of this story, as the half-hearted attempts to cover it up compromise it somewhat. Still, this title looks to be returning to its former glories writing-wise, although the art is looking a bit tired. (KG) 7

<=> When pop star Henrietta – not resembling Princess Di – returns from the dead, the British establishment wants her to stay dead and send new, cuttingly stereotypical team Euro-Trash (including the cheekily named Gallic mutant Surrender Monkey) to try to kill her (again?). Blatently satirical, yes, but still amusing and wickedly close to the bone, Peter Milligan's superhero-Private Eye script works better as a parody, rather than featuring Di herself, while Mike Allred's pop art is perfect for this so-funny story. (IM) 8

<+> Milligan's pop culture satire loses some of its bite after the Marvel censors hide all mention of a certain deceased Princess. Replacing her is a fictional, yet equally annoying, media-manipulating pop star returned from the dead. She is likely to put the cynical team to shame, but not before their manager milks the situation for all it's worth! Allred's clear retro lines find a more suitable inker in the form of J. Bone, though his inks were probably mainly required to dye the hair of this celebrity. (MAT) 7

X-Statix 14

by Milligan & Allred + Bone

<+> Diana/Henrietta is captured by the enemy, but proves to be a rather shrewd hostage. It looks like this comic is out of the rut it fell into. We've got bitchy internal politics, some interesting musings on superhero motivation and morality, and bitter jokes about human nature. Back to business, then! Even the art seems revitalised. The Spider-Man cameo is completely pointless, however, and smacks of Marvel editorialising. (KG) 7

NYX 1

by Quesada & Middleton

Just what we need: another teen mutant book. Only, this is a bit different. Joe Quesada crafts an excellent tale of teenage angst, from the usual parent/child gulf to the constant threat of violence at school, with such natural ease that when the inevitable mutant power kicks in, it's genuinely surprising. Needless to say Joshua Middleton's art is breathtaking, a perfect complement to such a tight script. (JB) 8

Teenager Kiden steals cigarettes from her mum, sleeps around, makes enemies in the 'hood and her younger brother is a sleazy dealer. Could life suck any more? Yes – she might be a mutant. Middleton's art is more subtle than his leery New Mutants covers and adequately relates teen confusion and the violent, chaotic world that surrounds Kiden. Quesada's script is less worthy and more dirty than feared. Both offer enough to bring me back next issue. (IM) 6

Quesada gets down with the kids for this street-level mutant title aided by the luxurious art of Middleton. Young teen rebel Kiden discovers she has strange new powers, but perhaps is more interested in getting high in the clubs and stealing cigarettes. Surprisingly Quesada manages to portray a fairly realistic depiction of teenage rebellion, but Middleton's illustrations are perhaps a little too pretty. Don't mutants suffer from acne? (MAT) 7

X-Treme X-Men 32

by Claremont & Kordey + Hanna

<+> Rogue and Cannonball stop a suicide bomber in Texas, but find no easy answers to terrorism. Chris Claremont's plot is over-simple, but benefits from interesting character interludes. Igor Kordey's pencils have suddenly come alive, offering scenes of vibrancy, flux and atmosphere of such subtlety that at times Scott Hanna's still-appallingly thick inks can't smother. I'm shocked, baffled, and excited by the transformation: the same team that was terrifyingly flat and ugly now has vigour, life and personality, embellished by some lushly dense Liquid studio colours. (IM) 7

US Indies

A Sort of Homecoming 1

by Hurd & Camello; Alternative Comics

Owen mourns best friend David's death. This is fertile territory for the talented, but Damon Hurd's 'deep' script is unpalatably dull, shockingly unoriginal and suffocated by clichés. Pedro Camello's black and white art has an appropriately lonesome and numb overtone, but the gently striking cover shows how well a little colour can illuminate and excite his work. An engrained perspective makes this the best cover of the month, so I'm desperately sad that it's the only brilliant aspect of this title. (IM) 4

Boneyard 12

by Moore; NBM Publishing

<--> Glump plays mad scientist, while Paris frets about his IRS bill and Abbey's long recuperation. There's not much more to say. The comedy isn't funny, so the melancholia of the main story just takes over. (DK) 5

Chillers 1

by Espinosa & Perry + various; Antarctic Press

An anthology of scary tales, the show-stealers being Rod Espinosa and Craig Babiar's *Hunter*, and Fred Perry's *Gold Digger* story. Valiant efforts also come from David Hutchison, Sherard Jackson and Kelsey Shannon, who use this opportunity to experiment with their creative styles. An eclectic and bizarre – but enjoyable – gorefest. (CEB) 6

Darkham Vale 3

by Lawrence; APComics

Ryan and Brendis run foul of zombies, vampires, monsters, and, of course, Lord Kerith. Jack Lawrence turns in a fast-paced script, playing to his own strengths as an artist with a cartoony style. His colouring too deserves mention, as it adds to the vibrancy of this supernatural adventure. A British horror-filled hope. (CEB) 7

Digital Graffiti 1

by Frith & Fry; APComics

A futuristic London, where gangs of teenagers run amok and speak like Americans. Beez, Kenzo and Sirius decide to steal a special keypad, but not if Mister Len has anything to do with it. Creators Alex Frith and Gez Fry make the mistake of introducing too much too quickly, without clearly establishing the main players and premise. Such teething problems are common in new series, however, and the creators appear to possess the right skills to get this title on track and noticed. (CEB) 6

Happy Halloween, Li'l Santa

by Trondheim & Robin; NBM Publishing; $14.95

With Lewis Trondheim attached as writer, it's a guaranteed seal of quality... yet without a single word written in this all-silent tale, it's still a success. Thierry Robin draws another eloquent adventure of Li'l Santa, as his friend, The Mummy, brings Halloween to Lapland. Their two different traditions mix amicably, as the real threat comes from an unrelenting logging company on a direct course to Santa's grotto. An innocent yet observant tale, one that is above all, fun. (CEB) 8

Junction 17: Black Wave 2

by Hutchison; Antarctic Press

A great-looking *Matrix*-meets-manga style comic, but what else do you expect when creator David Hutchison is given the full-colour and glossy paper treatment? In the world of 'hyper reality' on-line gaming, the stakes are suddenly raised as players start to be killed for real, and Nisa looks to be next unless her friends can reach her doctors with her code in time. Slick sci-fi. (CEB) 7

Ninja High School 109

by Bair & Bevard; Antarctic Press

<=> The Bard and manga collide as the school play, Romeo and Juliet, gets underway. Casting decisions cause rivalry, this leading to retribution, which of course somehow manages to lead all the way to Yumei Katana. Creators Katie Bair and Robby Bevard use the set-up to flesh out the supporting characters, and do what they do best: produce a light-hearted and fun-filled read. (CEB) 8

Rehd 1

by Lotfi; Antarctic Press

<=> A surprisingly surreal start for Sam Lotfi's new fantasy series, as perspectives change with rapidity. Although reading Rehd #0 beforehand certainly helps bring you up to speed, talented storyteller Lotfi will doubtlessly clarify all next issue. A promising opening. (CEB) 7

Twilight X: Storm 5

by Wight; Antarctic Press

<=> Richard discovers that the island is controlled by the aptly named Wankers (White American Nationalist Klan). Creator Joseph Wight uses the resulting flashback scene to incorporate more cinematic-style action, and to let the comics world know of his presence. Meanwhile, the character's present situation is used to heat up the relationship with Melissa. Atmospheric adventure. (CEB) 7

Warrior Nun Areala 20

by Babiar & Zicari; Antarctic Press

<-> The corpse-stealing voodoo-master, Strawjack, strikes again, causing Areala to be placed on his trail, but how does the M.I.A. Father Crowe fit into all of this? While Craig Babiar's art never fails to impress, co-writer Anthony Zicari's reduced input this issue is felt, as some of the usual sharpness is absent. A satisfying read, nonetheless. (CEB) 6

Canadian Indies

Transformers/GI Joe 2

by Ney Rieber & Lee; DreamWave Productions

<-> The Joes unearth the rusting remains of the Autobots in their covert assault on the Cobra Island stonghold, while the ninja arch-rivals Snake Eyes and Storm Shadow fight to the disfiguring finish. Jae Lee lends some much-needed respectability to the action figure crossover with the moody realism of his shadowy artwork, while John Ney Rieber sends his WWII-set storyline cracking along at the necessary pace for this surprisingly impressive little miniseries. (MAT) 7

UK Newsstand

Classics from the Comics 91

by various; DC Thomson

<=> More archaic fun from the vaults of DC Thomson's humour titles. Many of the characters

are still thriving (Bash Street Kids, Desperate Dan, Minnie, Dennis) while others (Jocks and the Geordies, Baron Von Reichs Pudding) have, wisely, been consigned to history. An intriguing glimpse at British comics of yesteryear. (SM) 6

Commando 3664

by unknown; DC Thomson

<+> *Sand Devils!* tells the tale of a resourceful Sergeant Major who must improvise to survive a plane crash over the African Desert. If that wasn't enough, he'll have to contend with a deadly tribe of nomads and a German Afrika Corps unit unaware that WWII has been over for two years! An entertaining premise, and a great read. Good show, chaps! (SM) 8

Judge Dredd The Megazine 212

by various; Rebellion

<=> There's not-to-be-missed Dredd action as Gordon Rennie and Carlos Ezquerra's two-part adventure *Sturm und Dang* reaches its rip-roaring climax. Judge Death finds Las Vegas once more a city of sin; while *Armitage* makes a welcome return with a spate of grisly murders and a trenchant satire of religious faith. *Charley's War* so far treads a fine line between comicbook larks and the horrors of war. (DK) 8

2000 AD Progs 1361-1364

by various; Rebellion

<--> Prog 1361 clears the way for a new line-up, but has something of a highlight in Gary Wilkinson and Leigh Gallagher's madcap WWI spoof-Cthulhoid caper. Prog 1362 establishes a sort of anti-aesthetic with *Dead Men Walking*, *Synnamon* and *Durham Red*, and Judge Dredd soon follows suit; thank goodness for the return of *Caballistics Inc.* (DK) 5

Warhammer Monthly 74

by Alexander + Abnett & Taylor + various; Black Library

<=> Four intense stories, including Dan Abnett and Anthony Williams' excellent *Titan*; an always-enjoyable tale from the Ten-Tailed Cat; and (the title's Achilles' heel) the incomprehensible-to-new-readers *Deathwatch*. Mixing in influences of everything from *Aliens* to *Lord of the Rings*, this hammer hits the nail right on the head. (CEB) 7

Small Press

The Immortals 1

by Atkins & Doyle;
£2.50 from Smallzone
10 Cleveland Avenue, High Ercall
Telford, Shropshire TF6 6AH

With a tip of the hat to Judge Dredd and Robocop, this 16-page, photocopied 12-issue series is set in a dystopian future – a brain-washed police state where the unfortunately named lawman Skrote rebels against his conditioning. Despite some nice ideas, the rough-edged black and white visuals – although possessing a certain verve – nevertheless compare unfavourably against the impressive standards of other small press endeavours nowadays. (JE) 5

Phobias

by West + Hitchcock & various;
Accent UK; £3 from D. West,
2 Mill Lane, Holmes Chapel,
Crewe CW4 8AT

Nine phobia-filled stories. Dave Hitchcock sets the ball rolling in style with an agoraphobic vampire; then Chris Doherty brings on the clowns; Dave West demonstrates arachnophobia and super-skilled panel layouts, while Ben Dickson and William Volley form an excellent union for a tale of loneliness. This really does come across as more of a professional creators' gathering than a small press one! (CEB) 8

The Rainbow Orchid Part One

by Ewing;
£2.50 from G. Ewing
57A Heathcote Drive
East Grinstead RH19 1NB

A young archaeologist sets out on a quest for a legendary flower, only to encounter nefarious types out to stop him. This is a spectacular work, at once echoing the classic style of Tintin while forging something new. The art is wonderfully attractive but what impressed me the most was the slow-burning, exquisitely constructed plot. Great stuff. (KG) 9

Tales to Demolish 2

by Haven;
£2 from Smallzone
10 Cleveland Avenue, High Ercall
Telford, Shropshire TF6 6AH

The author accidentally kills acclaimed indie comics creators Dan Clowes and Adrian Tomine, who vow vengeance from beyond the grave. Original, surreal, subversive humour from US amateur Eric Haven, who reveals a knowing satirical streak towards the medium in this 24-page mini-comic. The tight, disciplined art is at times striking in its eleaborately cross-hatched glory, reinforcing the overall polished presentation. (JE) 8

Thudd the Barbarian 2

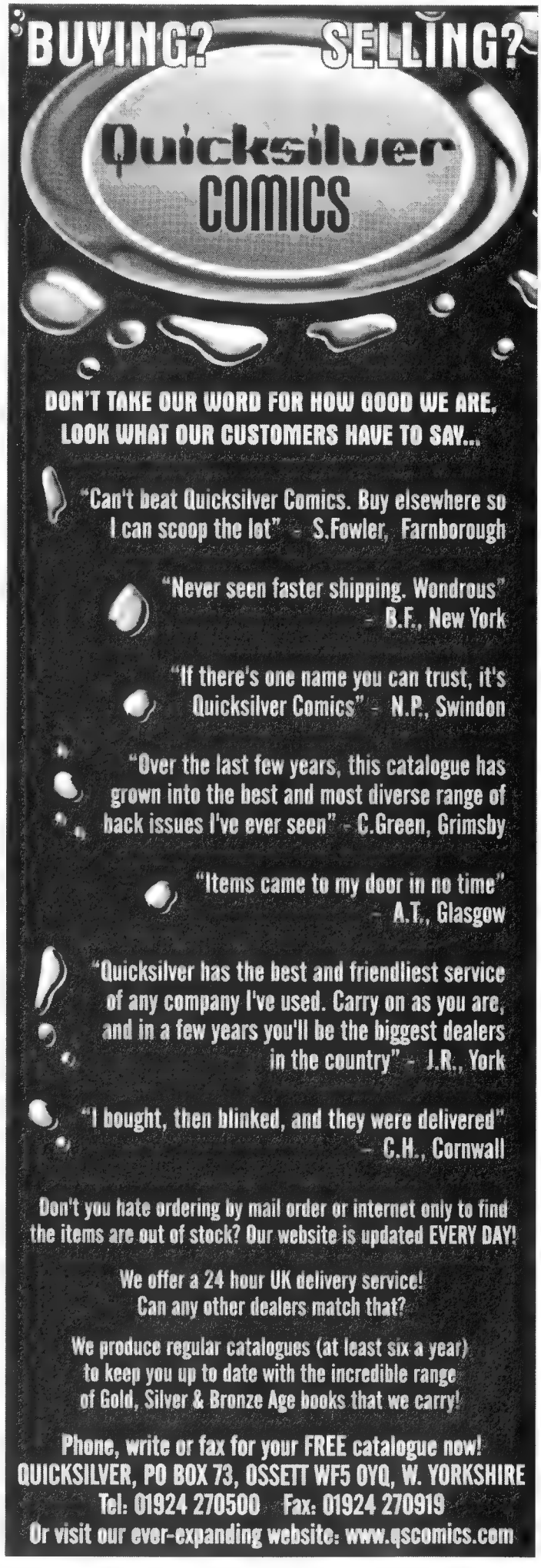
by Critchlow;
£2 from C. Critchlow
PO Box 371, Southport PR8 6YE

<=> The muscle-bond meathead barbarian is hired by a couple of questing scholars searching for the elixir of eternal life in the northern wastes: enter comical encounters with frost giants, ice pixies and frozen beer barrels. Carl Critchlow effortlessly manages to expand his White Dwarf parody strip to comic size, filling it with gags, while his matured, clearly lined art and muted colour scheme has a surprisingly European feel to it. Now if only Bil could be encouraged to resurrect Gobbledigook ! (MAT) 8

Young Man of a Certain Mind 1

by Martinson;
£2.50 from Smallzone
10 Cleveland Avenue, High Ercall
Telford, Shropshire TF6 6AH

A would-be graphic designer reflects on his unfulfilled ambitions and the foibles of his fellow workers. A rather fractured narative and a main supporting character who remains oddly nameless detract little from US creator Lars Martinson's accomplished cartooning – bold linework, lightly rendered, vaguely not unlike a minimalist Robert Crumb. The main protagonist is, perhaps unintentionally, a wonderfully realised, self-absorbed irritant in this lovingly produced 44-page quality book. (JE) 8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Q&A

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Baffle us with comics questions, or save us with answers!

Ro-Jaws and Hammerstein

Roger Newson
32 Rosemary Avenue
Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9HX

COULD you please tell me it Titan Distributors ever released the Ro-Jaws and Hammerstein lead figures similar to the rest of the **2000 AD** characters in the 1980s.

If they did release them, where can I find them. If not, why not?

Fantastic start, lead figures! So where's the Q&A Brains Trust when you need them? Any reader care to help out with a reply for next month?

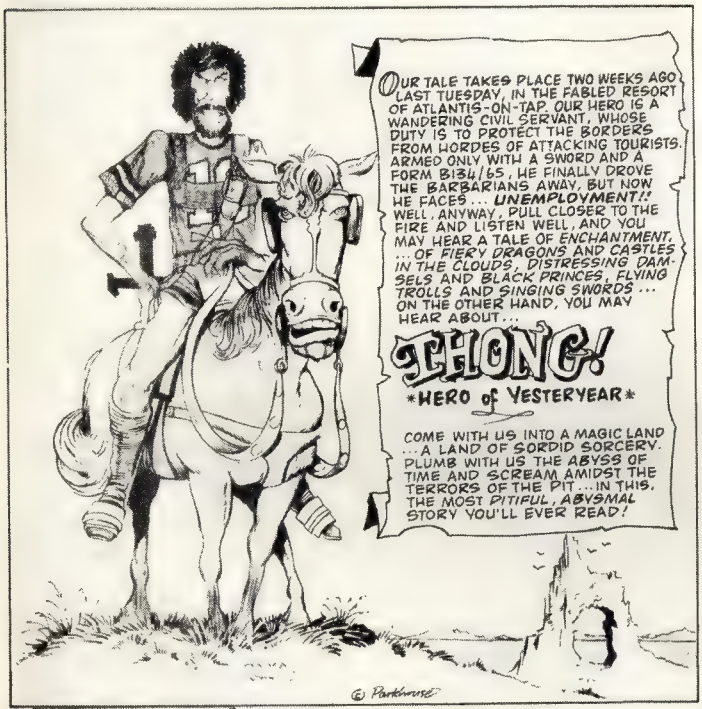
Sequels and specials

Adam Osman via e-mail

I'M A longtime Marvel fan who stopped reading comics around eight years ago. Having recently seen *X-Men 2* and *Daredevil*, I was wondering if there are any plans for sequels to these?

Also, do you know if there is going to be a special edition version of *DD* and *Spider-Man* films, as Marvel have done with the *X-Men 1.5?*

The two-disc DD Special Edition came out in July, Adam, priced £19.99 (or £14.99 on video). Haven't heard anything about Spider-Man, though.


OUR TALE TAKES PLACE TWO WEEKS AGO LAST TUESDAY, IN THE FABLED RESORT OF ATLANTIS-ON-TAP. OUR HERO IS A WANDERING CIVIL SERVANT, WHOSE DUTY IS TO PROTECT THE BORDERS FROM HORDES OF ATTACKING TOURISTS. ARMED ONLY WITH A SWORD AND A FORM B134/65, HE FINALLY DROVE THE BARBARIANS AWAY, BUT NOW HE FACES... UNEMPLOYMENT!! WELL, ANYWAY, PULL CLOSER TO THE FIRE AND LISTEN WELL, AND YOU MAY HEAR A TALE OF ENCHANTMENT, ... OF FIERY DRAGONS AND CASTLES IN THE CLOUDS, DISTRESSING DAMSELS AND BLACK PRINCES, FLYING TROLLS AND SINGING SWORDS ... ON THE OTHER HAND, YOU MAY HEAR ABOUT...
THONG!
HERO of YESTERYEAR
COME WITH US INTO A MAGIC LAND ... A LAND OF SORDID SORCERY. PLUMB WITH US THE ABYSS OF TIME AND SCREAM AMIDST THE TERRORS OF THE PIT ... IN THIS, THE MOST PITIFUL, ABYSMAL STORY YOU'LL EVER READ!
© Parkhouse

COME, RUSTBUCKET, TRUSTY STEED... TURN ONCE AGAIN INTO THE SUNSET/SUNRISE...
MANY FOES SEEK THAT WHICH I POSSESS ...THE FABLED KEY OF ATLANTIS!

*Last month Geoff Barker enquired about "Thong – The world's most obscure fantasy hero" as he'd seen an ad for the Steve Parkhouse strip in the original 1975 **Warrior #1**. We promised to run an illo when we'd more space, so here it is: the splash page from his 9-page first appearance in Steve Moore's **Aspect** #2 [1970]. Terry Gilliam-esque in its surreal development, it followed in Moore's oneshot **Orpheus** [1971], was reprinted in the final **It's All Lies** [#6, 1973], and continued in **Warrior** #2-6 [1974-5]. Wonderful in its lunacy, it's a strip worthy of collecting together and would fit perfectly into a 32 page oneshot. Steve?*

German Resistance

Justin Bleeck via e-mail

I WAS wondering if you know if there have ever been any comics about the German Resistance during WWII? It's a major part of the War that seems to have been ignored or forgotten by most comic writers and publishers.

There are a lot of books out there about this subject – for example about The White Rose, the senior officers close to Hitler who tried to assassinate him on more than one occasion, the normal folk who hid Jews in their cellars and garden sheds, and all those unsung heroes who tried to stop the madness from within Nazi Germany.

*Can't believe for a second that DC Thomson's ever-reliable **Commando** digest hasn't covered the German Resistance numerous times. When you've produced over 3670 issues, you pretty well exhaust all aspects of the subject! Peter Richardson's Stilletto Books (7 Bowman's Drive, Battle, East Sussex TN33 OLT) produces the admirable – if pricey – **Achtung! Commando** title (£15 a copy, but well worth it). Check him out.*

Tex Willer UK

Erik van Helvoort via e-mail: evhelvoort@lankhorst-mouldings.nl

COULD anybody give me some information about **Tex Willer** editions in the UK? I know there were a few editions in the early-'70s. Check my homepage: www.texwiller.nl – I managed to find just one UK cover so far.

Further, I would like to know if these books are still for sale in any UK comic book shop or if there is a good UK Internet site out there where I can ask for it?

*Dez Skinn flies solo on this one: Top Sellers, best remembered for their UK editions of **Classics Illustrated** and **MAD** (and maybe **House of Hammer**) started a series named **Western Classics** in 1971. Digest sized with 128 black and white interior pages, it was dedicated to reprints of Tex Willer, who had the main credit on the cover's title logo.*

Despite the phenomenal popularity of the strip in Italy since 1948, while Joe Kubert recently produced a three-parter, the UK and US have pretty much failed to find a market for the character. With 128 books during the 1970s plus the Kubert story, you're fared far better in Holland!

Blueberry reprints

Justin Davison via e-mail: justus_indomitus@hotmail.com

DO YOU know anything about the Hodder and Stoughton *Blueberry* reprints? They reprinted the first four chapters in the *Fort Navajo* storyline but I have never seen the fifth part, and indeed I suspect it was never published.

Does anyone on your team of crazed panologists know if it did appear? What about reprinting the whole of the *Blueberry* saga in English?

*Dez again: Egmont/Methuen produced the four Jean Giraud books from 1977 on (**Fort Navajo**, **General Golden Mane**, **The Iron Horse** and **Steel Fingers**) while the US's Comcat branch of Catalan Communications published three **Young Blueberry** trade paperbacks from 1989-91.*

*Marvel's Epic had a good try with **Blueberry** as an 8-issue run [1989-92] ranging from its 96 page launch with **Chihuahua Pearl** to slimmer 48 page later issues, covering **Balad for a Coffin** (#2, graphic novel format], then **Angel Face**, **The Ghost Tribe**, **End of the Trail**, **The Iron Horse**, **Steel Fingers** and finally **General Golden Mane**. Titan Books did UK editions of the first two.*

*In 1991, Epic also released **Marshal Blueberry: The Lost Dutchman's Mine**. Dark Horse's **Cheval Noir** ran **Arizona Love** across #46-50 [1993] in black and white, while in 1996 Mojo produced **The Blueberry Saga**.*

It seems French cowboys are more popular in English than Italian ones!

The Jellymen

Neil Welch
52 Carter Avenue, Shanklin
Isle of Wight PO37 7LF

Does anyone remember *The Jellymen* from the late-'50s or early-'60s?

It was in **Beezer** or **Topper** (I'm not sure which) and was a two-page sci-fi series about octopus-like creatures which blew indestructible bubbles out of sucker-ended tentacles.

They were finally defeated by science teacher "Potassium" Roberts and his small group of freedom-fighting school children.

Dates and credits would be welcome, and also whether it has ever been reprinted anywhere.

Ronin mystery

Jake Sloan via e-mail: rooboy@ntlworld.com

I'M TRYING to identify a comic or strip I read when I was younger. I have tried searching the Net, but I fear my skills are weak. It involves a ronin/samurai in feudal Japan, who fights with a wooden sword, This was (I believe) in a British comic, probably from the late-'70s or early-'80s, with black and white line art.

I remember the hero/protagonist commits suicide in the end. In order to buy time for an honourable death, one of his friends (in full samurai armour) defends the bridge leading to him.

There is a striking image of the friend, in armour, shot through with arrows, dead on his feet. And I remember a piece of dialogue from the end "I will make them give you time," spoken by the friend, before he goes out to defend the bridge.

Please save my sanity if you can... It is driving me crazy that

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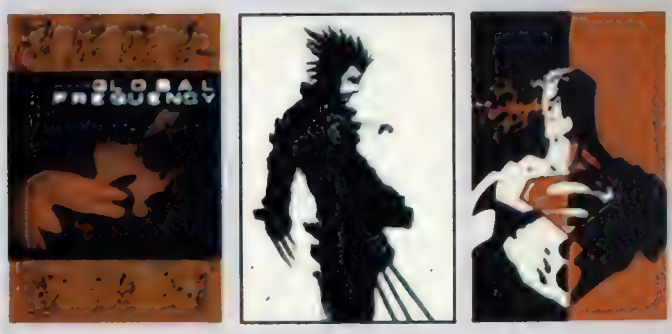

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(It's the arcade opposite Top-Shop/Top-Man which runs through to Games Workshop)
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www.okcomics.co.uk OK

no-one else seems to remember this comic.

Popeye

Nigel Squires via e-mail: NigeS@pgen.net

I WAS a fan of Popeye as a kid, and I'm trying to identify and locate a **Popeye** book I used to own. It was a softcover album published in the UK sometime between 1967 and 1970 as far as I recall. It contained various stories featuring most of the well-known Popeye characters such as Olive Oyl, Wimpy, and Grandma.

The only story I can remember anything about is one where Popeye fights a robot, which he can only defeat by calling a 'time out' during the scrap and getting a screwdriver to dismantle it!

Answer Updates

Readers provide answers for previous issues' questions

Li'l Abner, CI #165

Tim Barnes via e-mail: TimBarnes@chaykincollector.fsnet.co.uk

A QUICK answer to D. Lafferty's query about the Dark Horse *Li'l Abner* books: this is the **Al Capp's Li'l Abner: The Frazetta Years** series. I bought the first volume (dated May 2003) recently, covering Sunday strips from November 1953 to November 1955, and have to say I was somewhat disappointed with it. The first nine months' worth of these Sundays predate Frank Frazetta's involvement with the strip.

The reproduction is not particularly clever; looks like they've scanned from the published (**NY Sunday Mirror**) comics sections in which they appeared. So there's some blotchy, off-register pages, with linework breaking up. This was particularly noticeable for me, having bought the Kitchen Sink Press editions to which this series is a companion. The reproduction of the KSP series was excellent on the whole. I was hoping that the Dark Horse series would also be in black and white, from original art or syndicate proofs, so that the reader could better appreciate the subtleties of Frazetta's assists (which after all is what they're selling this on the strength of). Yuk, now I know why prepositions are what you don't end sentences with.

The book also has 27 dailies from Frazetta's first sequence (with about a week missing from the middle) as an introduction to the volume. Nice stuff, but emphasising the shortcomings of the reproduction of the Sundays. And last, but not least, annotations for each of the Sundays in this collection by Denis Kitchen.

Despite my disappointment with this, it is a relatively inexpensive collection, and I expect I'll pick up the rest of the series.

The Knights of Pendragon and Overkill

Rob Kirby via e-mail: rob_ak_38@yahoo.co.uk

FURTHER to Keiron Mullens' response about the butchering of *The Knights of Pendragon* stories in **Overkill** *(Q&A* #165), I thought it might be worth adding a little of the background to what was actually going on here. Basically, the UK offices were producing the full-length stories exclusively for the UK market, with **Overkill** anthologising them in the UK.

However, dealers objected to be excluded from purchasing the imported US editions, and so a compromise was reached whereby the US imports would appear in the specialist comic shops only – unlike earlier UK/USA efforts such as **Dragon's Claws** and the original **Pendragon and Death's Head** series which had also appeared on the newsagents' shelves as well – bagged with a cover sticker stating that the contents of this comic had already appeared in Britain inside **Overkill**.

This was, however, patently untrue. Because, as Mullens points out, almost all of the early strips that did appear in **Overkill** had been already been deliberately edited, to remove all trace of the Marvel Universe (superhero) parts of each story. In fact, if you look carefully at certain issues of the first American colour comics, you can actually see where someone in the production team forgot to cover up the UK 'Next Issue' tagline, which occurs several pages before the actual conclusion of the story, which then ends with its own 'Next Issue' tag line as well. Whoops!

As for that exclusive *Pendragon* strip in **Overkill** #5, which was one of only three new strips that appeared solely in the UK (despite early editorial promises to the contrary), this was designed to recap some of the material that had been deleted from the next two issues of **Overkill** that reprinted #3 of *The Knights of Pendragon* (Volume 2). In fact the only '**Overkill**-era' strip that later escaped the clutches of that anthology was *Motormouth*, which later resurfaced in its original uncut form inside the first 10 issues of the relaunched 100-page monster-sized **Exploits of Spider-Man**.

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2012 AD
WELL, FRIDAY — DIDN'T THINK WE'D EVER SEE THE OLD GIRL AGAIN
AYE, WONDER IF SHE MISSED US?
MARCO POLO CALLING EARTH... COME IN CONTROL...
SIR — I CAN'T RAISE ANYONE
SO MUCH FOR OUR SPECIAL RADIO THE BOFFINS SAID WOULD WORK ANYWHERE! — RUN FAULT ANALYSIS.
THAT CAN'T BE HERE!
STEVE!
WHAT IS IT, PROFESSOR?
THAT SPACESHIP DOWN THERE — I SAW IT FLASH AND EXPLODE! EARS AND IT CAN'T BE HERE UNSCATHED — WE MUST INVESTIGATE!
NO! BOBBY PROFESSOR — MY BRIEF IS CLEAR. ONE, RECOVER THE 7-19 SPACE-CRAFT. TWO, CATALOGUE AND ASSESS CONDITION OF OTHER EARTH CRAFT, COLLECTING FLIGHT DATA BOXES IF POSSIBLE. THREE, ASSIST YOUR BOTANICAL RESEARCH. BUT ON NO ACCOUNT BOARD NON-FLEET SHIPS. STAND-OFF PHOTOS ONLY UNLESS HQ CLEARS IT.
NO CHANCE OF CLEARANCE WITH THE RADIO ON THE BLINK — I MUST FIND A WAY.
COLONEL DARE REPORT TO THE CONTROLLER, PLEASE.
PILOT 71
5

BUT I MUST GET BACK TO MARS — MY BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH!
DR. DARE
I'LL LAY ON TRANSFER JUST TO YOU CAN
AND YOU EXPECT ME TO LIVE ON MARS?
IDIOT! CAN'T UNRAVEL THE MARTIAN MYSTERIES FROM HERE!
6

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Panel Beaters

Comics International's monthly sampler of the best of the small press and indie comics scene

WHILE THE UK supply of post-adolescent comics has dwindled to a mere handful, by contrast the indie and small press market has mushroomed. So, in addition to **CI**'s classified announcements and small press reviews section, *Panel Beaters* gives readers a chance to sample some of the best of what's currently out there.

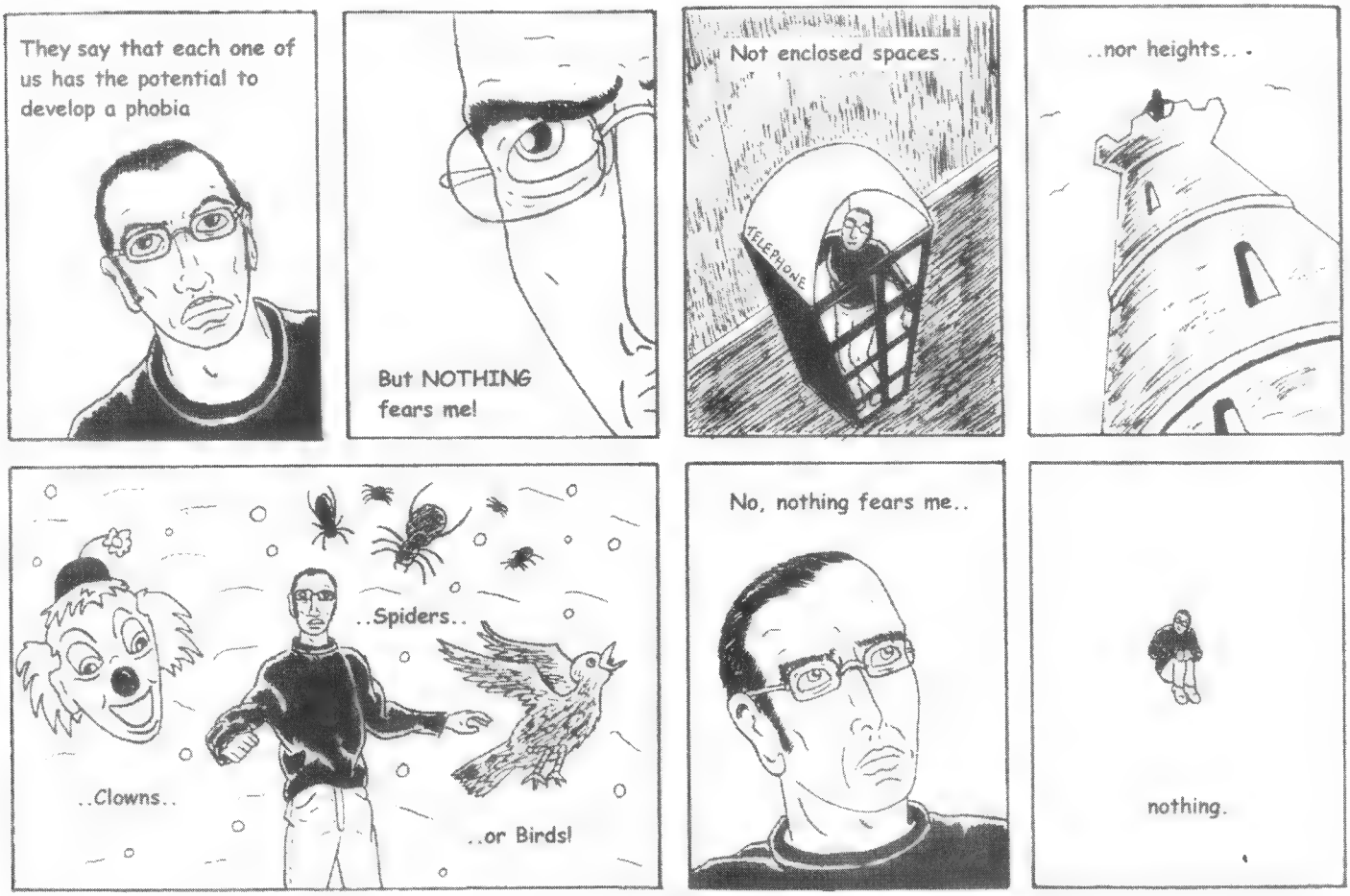
Each of the following strips is meant to be a standalone tale or gag that has been produced as an exclusive taster for **CI** readers, and is accompanied with full details about the comic, where you can find more of the writer and artist's work.

Would-be contributors to this section for future issues should note the proportions (printed size: 188mm wide, 120mm deep for double bank; 60mm deep for single bank) before submitting black and white copies of their work. You can email *editorial@comicsinternational.com* for the Panel Beaters style sheet, or write to us at **Panel Beaters, Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ.**

Compiled by Leonie O'Moore, Andy Smith & Dez Skinn

NOTHING FEARS ME

written and drawn by Colin Mathieson



NOTHING FEARS ME appears in **PHOBIAS**, available for £2.80 (cheques to: C. Mathieson). Write to him at: Accent UK, 8 Stelfox Avenue, Timperley, Cheshire WA15 6UL

BUNNY OAKLEY Part 3

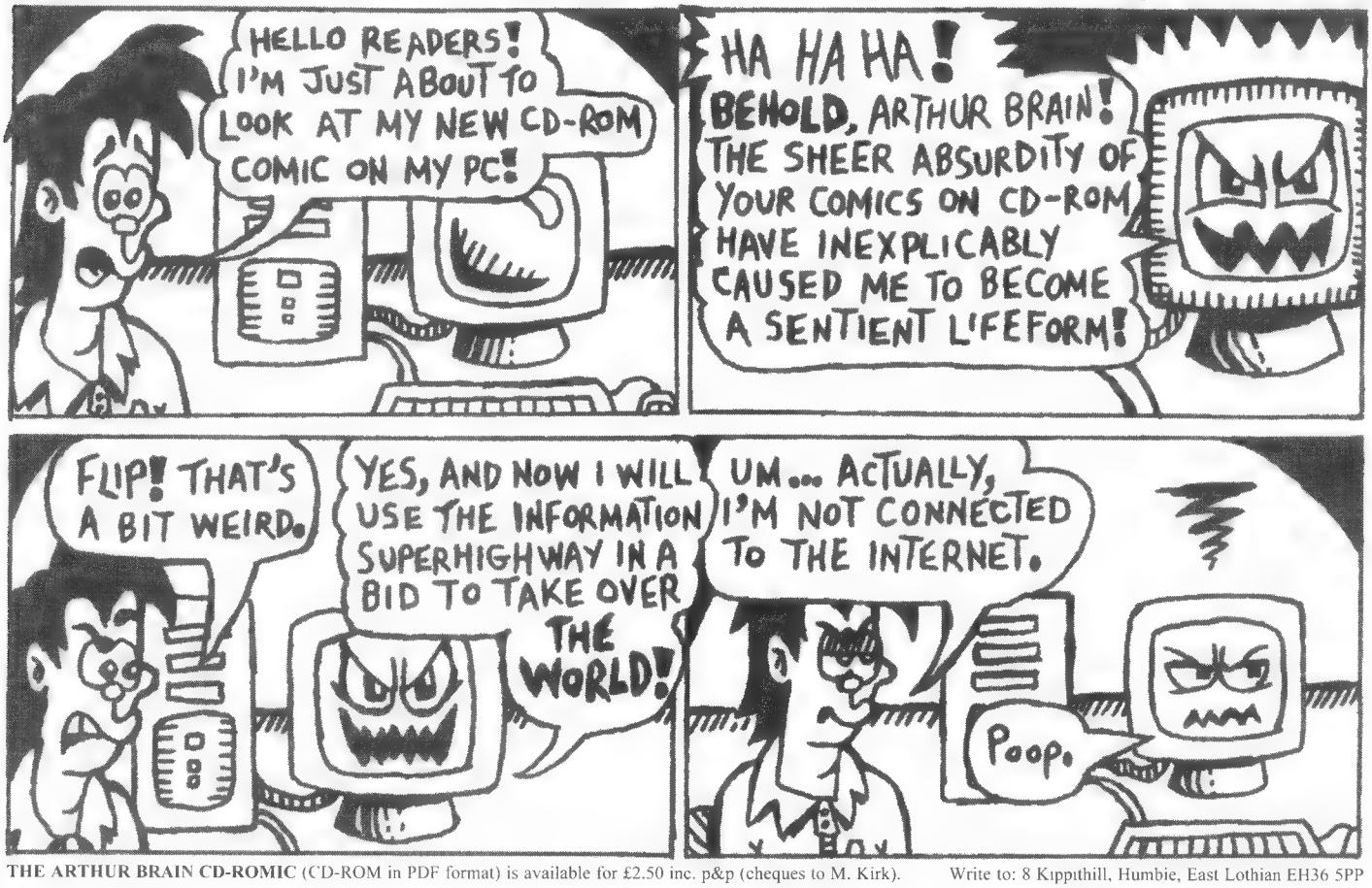
written and drawn by Richard J Smith

LOOK, BLONDIE - A BIG OLD SHELL!
I BET WE COULD HEAR THE OCEAN REAL GOOD THROUGH THAT!
HEY! GET OFF A ME!
I GUESS THE BEACH MUST BE REALLY CROWDED TODAY.

BUNNY OAKLEY is currently available for £1.00 + 25p p&p (cheques to: R. J. Smith). Write to him at: 196 Balby Road, Doncaster, West Yorkshire DN4 ONE

ARTHUR BRAIN

wroted and drawed by Malcolm Kirk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HA HA HA! BEHOLD, ARTHUR BRAIN! THE SHEER ABSURDITY OF YOUR COMICS ON CD-ROM HAVE INEXPLICABLY CAUSED ME TO BECOME A SENTIENT LIFEFORM!
FLIP! THAT'S A BIT WEIRD.
YES, AND NOW I WILL USE THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY IN A BID TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD!
UM... ACTUALLY, I'M NOT CONNECTED TO THE INTERNET.
Poop.

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written and drawn by Doctor Mondo

Sindee Virtue faces The Lurking Fear
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THE VAMPIRES PROWL -
THE GHOULS SHRED -
THE WERE WOLVES HOWL!
THE ANCIENT ONES SLIDE
'TIL THEY REACH THEIR GOAL.
EEEEEEKK!!!
CHEEZ, CAN'T A GIRL GET ANY PEACE!
BEAT IT YOU CREEPZ
FIN

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OPENS MIDDAY

Letters

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Under the influence

"Mad" Steven Morrell
881 Barnsley Road
Sheffield Lane Top
Sheffield S5 0QJ

WITH reference to Julian Dass's comment in #164 on Jack Chick and whether comics influence anybody: My cousin was influenced by comicbooks. He jumped off the roof of the kitchen extension and sprained his ankle. When asked why, he told us he was "trying to fly, like Superman". So, yes, people CAN be influenced by comics.

And on the subject of Mr Dass: Julian, you chicken shit bastard. Why don't you put your real address on your letters?

Retail & yob culture

Richard Domar,
9 Highlands Rd, Wolverhampton

HAVING read all the various comments about comics shops I think it's a good idea that people are actually discussing the situation because it's the 'yob culture' prevalent in today's society that is the cause.

If I was a shop owner and had invested in stock which was organised in order to allow any customer easy access to find a particular issue, I'd be pissed off if people pulled things out and returned them in the wrong place.

This situation would not be acceptable to me. In fact I would not stand for it and would make it known to all potential customers.

It seems to me that everyone working in retail has become jaded and used to the lack of courtesy from both sides of the counter. That's yob behaviour; selfishness and lack of consideration for both goods and people. Because it is commonplace everywhere it has become the norm, but it really doesn't have to be accepted.

8p retail profit shock!

Stephen L. Holland via e-mail:
page45@page45.com

SEVERAL of the most entertaining letters in **CI** recently seem to be from Name and Address Withheld. The man is prolific. But he's not always right.

"Ten Things I Hate About You" *(Comment,* **CI** #162) was a big bag-full-of-wrong, but, boy, did he give you an ideal format in which to vent spleen at everyone who's a misanthrope in comics.

Since then, Name and Address Withheld appears has moved to the Midlands, developed a split personality and decided to have a damned good go at his previously located self *(Letters,* **CI** #165).

And it was one mighty fine letter. One of the issues he raises deserves an immediate answer, namely: how can a 25 cent comic cost 25 pence?

Everyone (except Titan Books) knows that the exchange rate from dollar to pound sterling is hardly 1:1. So, from a retailer who has just charged 25p for the 25c **Conan** comic, here is one explanation: distribution costs.

It costs a set amount of money for Diamond to import a single comic. With a $2.25 comic, it can more easily absorb these costs than it can from a 25 cent comic that's just as big and takes just as much handling to distribute. And since it's not for charity – it's for the publisher's marketing campaign – you can't hold it against them to charge the retailer a fair amount.

What would you expect a 25 cent comic to cost on your shelves, based on the exchange rate? 17 pence seems about right. Well 17 pence is what they charged *us*, and, as I said, I can't and don't blame them.

So there are two ways of looking at this:
1) If we want to promote **Conan** – if we really believe that everyone in the known Cromisfere is interested in a new proposed series – we should take this opportunity to charge you nothing, because it only costs us 17 pence. Or...
2) 25p is a genuine bargain for any comic, if you are remotely interested in it in the first place.

There is so much more to be written about options one and two, but I'll leave that to you.

In the meantime, think on this: if we gave all our **Conan**s away for free to whomever approached the counter (and everyone would take something for free, regardless of whether they'd just shove it in the bin), who's to say when you walked into the shop there'd be any left for you?

A stand-out issue

Sam Ashurst via e-mail

WELL done for #165: it was a great issue. The two stand-out elements for me were Dez's lovely editorial and the brilliant e-mail from Matt B about people working in retail *(Letters)*.

It's nice to see positive stuff being written about the crazy industry that is comics.

How dare he..!

Saturnyne via e-mail
(address withheld by request)

SO, ROB Nott thinks **The Sandman** had peaked by #42 and was on a "relentless slide into unregulated self-indulgence" ... *(Reviews,* #165). **The Sandman** lost its way after issue 41? The funniest thing I've heard all year.

On the contrary, and probably in line with every other **Sandman** fan, I believe the issues beginning with #41 are some of the most incredibly moving stories anywhere. Issue #41 begins a story arc called *Brief Lives*, which has constantly moved me to tears, and laughter and grief and joy. It is, to my mind, probably the best of all the long stories, easily on a par with the *Fables and Reflections* volume, with some of the finest, most imaginitive artwork to be seen in any of the issues.

I think this reviewer, must have a very hard time dealing with real emotional issues like bereavement ... poor, silly person. If only he had the vision and clarity in his writing of fellow reviewers like Ian Murphy; then I might respect his opinion a little more. I'm tempted to say that if reviewers haven't the capacity to appreciate comics such as this, they forefeit the right to comment on ANY title intended for a mature reader.

Go back to your **Beano**, you unfortunate fool.

1940s DC: World's Not Really Best

David Robertson via e-mail:
d1robertson@hotmail.com

I'VE just read **World's Best Comics Golden Age Sampler**. The title is a bit of an overstatement, but the comic does offer a good variety and is an interesting history lesson. With four stories from the Forties, it is a nice introduction to that early era of superhero comics.

The Superman and Batman stories were pretty much what I had expected, having read comics from the period featuring these two characters before. It was interesting to see Superman's main enemy being a dodgy construction company, an example of the kind of social issue which I was already aware he got involved with at the beginning of his career. Also of note was Bruce Wayne's habit of smoking, which I didn't have prior

Mike Kazybrid's COMIC CUTS

Script by Paul Kristian

WAYNE'S COMIX
HEY- WAYNE...
...DO YOU STILL HAVE ALL THOSE BONDAGE, HEADLIGHTS, LINGERIE AND SPANKING COMICS?
MIC BUFF'S Comics
MART JOAR
THIS CHAP HERE IS INTERESTED IN ALL THAT KIND OF STUFF!!
KAZYBRID

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knowledge of. I was surprised that Wayne Boring drew the Superman strip. I had no idea his work on the character went back that far, having only previously seen his art in the '70s.

The Wonder Woman story was also enjoyable. I'm sure many of the plot points, including the women who are desperate to live in prison, and the paralysis ray gun which freezes them into various submissive poses, would have a Freudian going berserk. The artwork by H.G. Peter, previously unknown to me, is reminiscent of Gil Kane, which can't be bad.

The main attraction of the comic for me though, was a chance to get my first exposure to Jack Cole's Plastic Man. It did not disappoint, putting the modern era's "weird" comics to shame with its bizarre story. The dead villain, whose mind remained alert despite his body being inert, must have given kids a few nightmares. This antiquated character's views on women are humorously shown – having been buried in the 1600s he does not re-emerge into society until 1942 and is disgusted at women's "flesh-revealing" clothing.

The story is hilarious and scary at the same time and feeds the imagination in a wholly unique way. Jack Cole was obviously very imaginative, and that is what gives him the lead over mundane talents who try to be "edgy". I'll definitely be looking into more Cole Plastic Man.

Incidentally, I enjoy Kyle Baker's work and am looking forward to his interpretation of Plas, too.

Personally, I really enjoyed it all. Being in a cheap 'n' nasty format somehow made me feel I could read and enjoy the time-locked content so muc better. Reprinted as hardbacks on whiter-than-white heavy paper stock detracts from their roots too much. They were disposable ephemera, and this sampler brought that quality back.

Yeah, the Bruce Wayne smoking looked odd to me too, shows how quickly we accept these PC modifications. Like you, I was seriously impressed by Jack Cole. Judging by the experimental similarities, it makes you wonder if he'd given Eisner some serious competition as a pioneer innovator, had he not killed himself "in mysterious circumstances" in 1958 (a seriously bad year for the industry. Check out my editorial on page 3).

Ross and Gaiman

Mark Badham-Moore via e-mail:

WAS anybody else listening to Jonathan Ross's show on Saturday 15th November? He had Neil Gaiman on talking about **Marvel 1602**, **Wolves in the Walls**, **The Sandman** (of course), **American Gods** and most interestingly a new film that he has written that Dave McKean is directing under the auspices of Henson Films. I think that it's called *The Mask Dreamers* or something like that. Anyway it's costing £4million and will be fully computer-animated...

Why hasn't **CI** reported on it? I certainly hadn't heard anything about it until Gaiman's interview, which was very good as you would expect from Ross. If you missed it, the BBC Radio 2 website has archive shows and interviews. I'm sure it will be there on Ross's bit.

I'd also like to say a thank you to Kieron Mullens as he pointed me in the direction of Silver Acre Comics, where I was able to get a copy of **Knights of Pendragon** #18 in good condition and at a very reasonable price. I filled a few other gaps at the same time!

Beautiful Mack

Steve Page via e-mail: stevejeff@onetel.net.uk

WOW! Who said comics were getting boring? Who said Marvel wasn't adventurous?

I've just read and re-read **Daredevil** # 51 and 52, and I'm blown away. David Mack is an artistic genius. It feels like he's invading your mind with the multi-layered story, skillfully combining the power of words and pictures. No, more like poetry and paintings.

My eyes were all over the page at once, trying to take it all in. His page layout, the imaginative use of mosaic forms, the way he uses colour – nothing is put to waste – all of this contributes to a powerful story.

I checked back to #18 and 19, and Mack's getting better. Maybe its because he's telling his own story this time; he's broken out of the box.

To top it all, my wife [my wife!] started reading over my shoulder and her very first review of a comicbook was "that's beautiful".

These are comics for grown-ups, who enjoy their minds being stimulated and their souls fed. Thank you Mr. Mack, keep it coming.

Comics' loss is our gain. That's the second letter this issue which would have gone to the comics companies themselves if they still cared about balancing out content better and publishing reader opinions instead of those bloody awful hype pages.

Or it just me who can't stomach it the first time, let alone put up with seeing it 30-odd times a month? Come on, let rip – you know you want to.

Bank Holiday delays

Martyn Turner, Edinburgh

I WAS reading *Talking Shop* in #165, and there is one thing that bugs me. Why does a British bank holiday delay that week's US comics delivery by a day?

It's not as if the printing has been put back a day. If I was told that because of July 4th or Thanksgiving there's been a delay I could understand, but if the comics are in the country on the Tuesday or Wednesday, then an overnight courier company would be able to deliver them on a Thursday as usual.

I work for one of those companies, it's not difficult. In short, it sounds like a scam on the part of the delivery agents that should be looked into.

Directory

An at-a-glance reference guide to everything that counts in comics

Internet Listings

Comics creators

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Neal Adams ..... www.nealadams.com
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Leo Baxendale ..... www.reaper.co.uk/main.htm
Brian Bolland Art ..... www.velouria.com/Bolland
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On-line comics companies:

*By popular demand, **CI** now runs an at-a-glance overview of the major sites for on-line comics collectors and creators. Have your company listed for only £5 (US $8) a month. Bookable in 6-issue blocks, companies wishing to be included should send £30 or US $40 (UK: please add £5.25 to cover VAT) with trading name and website address.*

♦ Major companies requiring bold and boxed entries should send £60 + £10.50 VAT per 6-issue series, US $80 (£10/$16 per issue) and may add three lines of descriptive copy. Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International and sent to: ***Internet Listings, Comics International, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ***
Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail details to: Listings@comicsinternational.com

Retail Index: UK

Key to the abbreviations used:

imp = air imported new issues
back = back issues stocked
gn = graphic novels
tpbk = trade paperbacks
STO = standing order service (new comics reserved)
s-p = small press and fanzines
ind = independent comics
u/g = underground comix
prl = peripherals/supplies
RPG = role playing games
CCG = customisable card games
merch = trading cards, videos, t-shirts, posters, etc

Sorry, no websites, this is a shop guide

When telephoning from outside the UK, drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe & Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

Central London

Avalon Comics, 143 Lavender Hill, Battersea, London SW11 5QJ. Mon-Thurs 10-5.45; Fri 10-6.30; Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 11-3.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 020 7924 3609

Book & Comic Exchange, 14 Pembridge Road, Notting Hill Gate, London W11. Mon-Sun 10-8. Nothing legal refused! (back, ind, u/g) 020 7229 8420

Comic Showcase 63 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H ONE. Sun-Wed 10-7; Thurs-Fri 10-8; Sat 9.30-8 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, cartoon books, original art) 020 7434 4349

Forbidden Planet Outlet Store, 71-75 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1DG. Mon-Wed/Sat 10-6; Thurs-Fri 10-7 (low price book, comics, toys, videos and merch) 020 7420 3666

NEW **Forbidden Planet Megastore**, 179 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JR. Mon-Sat 9.30-7; Sun 12-6 (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, sci-fi/fantasy, books, video/DVD, games, mags, toys) 020 7420 3666

Gosh!, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH (opposite British Museum). Mon-Sun 10-6 (Thurs-Fri to 7) (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, foreign, largest range newspaper strip compilations in UK) 020 7636 1011

Mega-City Comics, 18 Inverness Street, Camden Town, London NW1 7HJ. Mon-Sun 10-6 (Thurs-Fri to 7) (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV, fantasy/horror, body art, subculture) 020 7485 9320

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftsbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EH. Mon-Wed 10.30-6.30; Thurs-Sat 10-7; Sun 10-4 (imp. back, STO, ind, merch, film/TV/fantasy) 020 7836 5630

Orbital, 9 Old Compton Street, London W1. Mon-Sat 10.30-7; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, manga, toys, Star Wars) 020 7434 9363

Outer London

A Place in Space, 101 Church Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, prl, merch, sci-fi, original art) 020 8686 2400

Ashcan Ltd, 3 Eagle Star House, 299-301 High Street, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1LG. Tues-Wed/Fri 12-5; Thurs 9-6; Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch) 020 8770 3815

Atomic Comics, 1112 High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 4AH. Mon-Tues 10.30-5.30; Wed 1-5.30; Thurs-Fri 10.30-6; Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV, art books, Games Workshop, toys, kits) 020 8597 8547

Black Angel Comics, Merton Abbey Mills, Watermill Way, Merton Abbey, London SW19 5WG. Sat-Sun 10-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, merch) 07771 502618

Calamity Comics, 160 Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2HR. Mon-Wed 10-6, (Thurs-Fri to 7); Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, fantasy film/TV, books, videos) 020 8427 3831

Epic Heroes, 21/23 Station Road, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 7JE. Mon-Sat 10-6. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, RPG, CCG, merch, toys, posters, Transformers)

Forbidden Planet, 175 North End, Croydon CR0 1TP. Mon-Fri 10-6 (Thurs to 7); Sat 9.30-6. (back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, u/g, CCG, merch) 020 8688 7190

Into the Void, 262 Streatham High Road, Streatham SW16 1HS. Mon-Sat 9.30-7; Sun 11-3. (imp, back, STO, merch, toys) 020 8677 7037

Krypton Komics, 252 High Road, Tottenham, London N15 4AJ (next to Tesco) Mon-Fri 10.30-6; Sat 10-6 Nearest Tube: Seven Sisters Road. (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind) 020 8801 5378 fax: 8376 3174

They Walk Among Us, 26 Red Lion Street, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1RW. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 6); Sun 11-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, fantasy/sci-fi/horror, subculture) tel/fax: 020 8948 8476

30th Century Comics, 18 Lower Richmond Road, London SW15 1JP. Mon-Wed 10.30-6; Thurs-Fri 10.30-7; Sat 10.30-6; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, Gold/Silver/Bronze Age specialists, British comics/annuals, books) 020 8788 2052

South East

Ace Comics, 63/64 High Street, Colchester, Essex. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch) 01206 561912

The American Comic Shop, 1 Church Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 4BS (off High Street). Mon-Fri 10-5.30 (Tues until 5); Sat 9-5.30. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, action figures) 01634 817410

Calamity Comics 2, 90 Queens Road, The Broadway, Watford WD1 2LA. Mon-Tues 10-5.30; Thurs/Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, fantasy film/TV, books, videos) 01923 249293

Cartoon Shop, 19 East Square, Basildon, Essex SS14 1HT. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, merch) 01268 534194

Central City Comics, 4 Eagle Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1JB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, foreign) 01473 233017

Chaos City, 20 Heritage Close, (off High Street), St Albans, Herts AL3 4EB. Mon-Thurs 10-5.30; Fri 10-7.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) 01727 838719

Comic Showcase, 19-20 St Clements Street, Oxford OX4 1AB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01865 723680

Comics Unlimited, Unit 11, The Arcade, Letchworth, Herts. Mon-Sat 9-5.30 (closed Wed) (imp, back, STO, RPG, CCG, merch, videos, Games W/shop) 01462 480018

Comix-shop.co.uk, 7a High Street, Maidenhead SL6 1JN. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, tpbk, gn, merch, CCG, toys) 01628 777998

David's Comic Shop, 5 Sydney Street, Brighton, Sussex BN1 4EN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.45; Sun 11-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g) 01273 691012

Daydream Nation Trading Cards at Hive, 6 Kensington Gardens, Brighton BN1 4AL. Mon-Sat 10-6 (CCGs, cards, sports, Ultra-Pro) 01273 687 877

Forbidden Planet, 60 Burleigh Street, Cambridge CB1 1DJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, CCG, merch, videos, sci-fi/fantasy books, film/TV magazines) 01223 301666

Forbidden Planet, 44 The Priory Centre, Dartford, Kent DA1 2HS. Mon-Wed 10.30-5.30; Thurs-Sat 10-5.30 (back, gn, ind, PRG, CCG, merch) 01322 224837

Incognito Comic Shop, 1-2 The Friars, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2AS. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 11-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film/TV) tel/fax: 01227 785898

Into the Void, 324-325 Chartwell North, Top Floor, Victoria Plaza, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5SR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 01702 613021

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton LU1 2TP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, STO, s-p, CCG, merch, Star Trek/Wars, sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Pat's Comics & Collectables, 7 Suttons Lane, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 6RD. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch, trading cards) 01708 459444

Phoenix Fantasy, 9 Market Street, Margate, Kent CT9 1EU. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch) 01843 224768

Slough Computers, 50 Village Shopping Centre, Slough, Berks SL1 1HP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, STO, ind, cards, second hand computer games) 01753 521594

Speeding Bullet Comics, 43 Hermitage Road, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1BY. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30 (Wed 10-5); Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, s-p, merch, STO, CCG, action figures, original artwork, life-size Spidey mannequin for hire) 01462 451117

Time Trek, 46 High Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1EG. Mon-Wed/Fri 9.30-5.30; Thurs 10-8; Sat 10-5.30; Sun 10-4 (imp, back, ind, gn, merch, STO, CCG, prl, sf TV/film) 020 8313 0677

Whatever Comics, 2 Burgate Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2HH. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, kits) 01227 453226

Whatever Comics, 5 Middle Row, High Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1TF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, model kits) 01622 681041

Midlands

Abstract Sprocket, 29 St Benedicts Street, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 4PF. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01603 624410

Another World, 42/43 Main Centre (opposite Wilkinsons) Derby. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, merch, rock/film/TV memorabilia, computer games) 01332 206606

Another World, 23 Silver St, Leicester LE1 5EU. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 01162 515266

Another World, 11 Market Street, Nottingham. Mon-Fri 9-5.30; Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 0115 9484122

Another World, 52 Stafford Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1JB. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01782 279294 fax: 202381 Mail Order: 271750

Another World, 23 Victoria Street, Wolverhampton WV1 3NP. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01902 717440

NEW **Comic Culture**, The Mall, 257-259 High Street, Lincoln LN2 1HX. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, prl) 01522 546611

Forbidden Planet, 31 Cross Cheaping, Coventry CV1 1HF. Mon-Sat 9.30-6 (Thurs to 7) (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV) 024 76229672

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 129 Middle Walk, Broadmarsh Centre, Nottingham NG1 7LN. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV) 0115 958 4706

Forbidden Planet Superstore, 38 Priory Queensway, Birmingham B4 7LA. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs-Fri to 6) (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, books, games, mags, kits, toys, videos) 0121 236 3026

Ground Zero, 9 Toothill Lane, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 1NJ. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, prl, CCG, merch, toys) 01623 622017

Nostalgia & Comics (FPI), 14-16 Smallbrook, Queensway, Birmingham. Mon-Thurs 9.15-5.45; Fri-Sat 9.15-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0121 643 0143

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY. Mon-Sat 9-6. (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, manga) 0115 950 8045

Phoenix Comix, 29 Abington Square, Northampton NN1 4AE. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, RPG, CCG, action figures) 01604 602311

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 6 East Street, Derby DE1. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, fantasy books, film/TV) 0115 950 9231

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 16 Angel Row, Nottingham NG1 6HL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, miniatures) 0115 950 9231

North West

All-American, 102 Newport Street, Bolton BL3 6AB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, STO, merch, Star Wars, WWF, action figures, S/Age, videos, records, CDs) 01204 366553

Alpha Omega Comics, 33-35 Library Street, Wigan, Lancs WN1 1NN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, merch, videos) 07796 854644

Forbidden Planet, 92 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 7) (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV, sci-fi/horror) 0151 707 1491

Forbidden Planet Megastore (FPI), 65 Oldham Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1JR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (2 floors; imp, back, STO, RPG, CCG, merch, books, toys, film and TV tie-ins, manga) 0161 839 4777

Imagination Station, 41 Bank Street, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 8HJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch)

Millennium Comics, 4 Church Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5NT. Mon-Tues 10-5; Wed closed; Thurs-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01606 49255

Moonwalk Collectables, Unit 15, Climax Works, Durham Street (off Station Road), North Redditch SK5 6YZ. Mon-Sat 10-6 (back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, merch, Star Wars and Dr Who specialist, TV/film, British titles) 0161 431 6050

Thunderbooks, 332 Lytham Road, Blackpool FY4 1DW. Mon/Tues/Thurs-Sat (Sun June-Oct inc) 10-5.30; Wed 1-3.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, media collectors' items) 01253 348321 fax: 407813

Thunderbooks II, 116 Friargate, Preston, PR1 9EE. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, merch) 01772 204287

Time Tunnel, 13 Earle Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 2BS. Mon and Wed-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, merch, film/TV memorabilia, action figures, videos, model kits) 01270 215496

Twin Suns, 127 Blackburn Rd, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 0AA. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, RPG, CCG, merch) 01254 386665

Worlds Apart (FPI), 58-60 Lime Street (city centre), Liverpool. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Fri 10-7) (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film) 0151 707 0839

North East

Books N' Comics, Unit 15, Forbes Building, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS1 4AW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, fantasy and film magazines, Doctor Who/Star Trek) 01642 249143

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 30 Eastgate, The Headrow, Leeds LS2 7JL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, LF film books, film/TV mags, posters, toys, kits, trading cards, stills, Star Trek/Doctor Who) 0113 242 6325

Forbidden Planet, 59 Grainger Street, Newcastle NE1 5JE. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, fantasy/sci-fi books, videos) 0191 261 9173

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 41 Dundas Street, Middlesbrough TS1 1HR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs until 7) (imp, gn, s-p, STO, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, video, action figures, film/TV, manga) 01642 248889

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Matilda, off the Moor, Sheffield. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 9.30- 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, model kits, sci-fi/fantasy books, horror magazines, newspaper strip books) 0114 276 9475

The Last Picture Show, 38-39 The Lanes, The Oasis, Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield S9 1EP. Mon-Thurs 10-8; Fri 10-9; Sat 9-7, Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV and rock memorabilia) 0114 256 9604 fax: 255 3399

Millennium Comics, Stall 141, Warrington Indoor Market. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01925 575657

Off-World Comics, 200 Park View,

Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear NE26 3QP. Mon-Tues/Thurs 10-5.30 (closed Wed); Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, CCG, merch) 0191 251 2288

Sheffield Space Centre, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield. Mon-Sat 10-5 (Wed closed) (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, Star Trek) 0114 275 8905

Travelling Man, Unit 8/9, The Corn Exchange, Call Lane, Leeds LS1 7BR. Mon-Thurs 10-5.30; Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 0113 242 7227

Travelling Man, 54 Goodramgate, York YO1 2LF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 01904 628787

West Country

American Dream Comics, 72 Walcot Street, Bath BA1 5BD. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, hobby kits, CDs) 01225 424881

Area 51, 143 Gloucester Road, Bristol. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, original art) 0117 924 4655

Automattic Comics, Unit 2, 17 Pickwick Road, Corsham SN13 9BQ. Mon-Tues 12-5; (Wed closed); Thurs-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01249 701647

Collector's Choice, 45 Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1TX. Mon-Sat 9-5 (S/Age, British comics/annuals, vintage mags, toys, memorabilia) 01452 410232

Forbidden Planet, 30 Penn Street, Bristol BS1 3AS. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 7); Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, subculture) 0117 929 8692

Forbidden Planet, 43-45 East Street, Southampton SO14 3HN. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 6); Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV) 023 80230991 fax: 230996

Ian's Books & Comics, 195a Albert Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO4 0JP (next to Tesco). Mon-Tues/Thurs-Fri 10.30-5.15 (Wed closed); Sat 10-5.15 (imp, back, tpbk, STO, s-p, prl, toys) 023 92422731

Into the Void, 11 Rodbourne Road, Swindon SN2 2AG. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, CCG, merch) 01793 434363

Kaboom, 65 High Street, Totnes, Devon TQ10 9PU. (new, back, action figures, t-shirts, board games, RPG, import computer games, mail order) 01803 863049

Kathies Comics, Unit BG29, Broadmead Gallery, The Galleries Shopping Centre, Bristol BS1 3XB. Mon-Wed/Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Thurs 9-6; Sun 11-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0117 922 1170

Kathies Comics, 20 Market Avenue, Plymouth, PL1 1PH. Mon-Fri 9.30- 5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 01752 257800

Paradox Comics, 17 High Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1AB. Mon-Fri 10.30-5; Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, merch, videos) 01202 661346

Purple Haze, 38 Eastlake Walk, Drakes Circus Shopping Centre, Plymouth, Devon PL1 1BX. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, film, TV, sci-fi/horror/genre books, videos, Star Trek/Wars, cassettes/CDs) 01752 254136

Wonderworld, 540 Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset. Mon-Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, CCG, merch, film/TV/media, beanie babies) 01202 394918

Wales

Cardiff Fantasy Centre, 1st Floor, Jacobs Market, West Canal Wharf, Cardiff. Sat 9.30-4.30 (imp, back, STO; established over 20 years) 029 206 58184 (eves)

Comix Shoppe, 13 Shoppers Walk, Swansea SA1 3AY. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, anime, Games W/shop) 01792 642097

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5 Duke Street, Cardiff. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, sci-fi fantasy/horror books, Star Trek/Wars) 029 202 28885

Negative Zone, Provision Market Gallery, High Street, Newport, Gwent NP9 1DD. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind; established for 11 years) 01633 222159

Scotland

Asylum Books & Games, 29 Adelphi, Aberdeen AB11 5B2. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Mon and Thurs to 8); Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, new/second hand RPG, CCG, books, original art) 01224 574637

Black Hole Comic Shop, Unit 3, 5 Victoria Road, Dundee DD1 1ER. Mon-Thurs 10-5; Fri-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, second hand records, CDs, videos) 01382 221037

City Centre Comics, 51 Parnie Street, Glasgow G1 5LU. Tues-Sat 10-5 (back) 0141 552 2208

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Schoolhill, Aberdeen AB10 1JX. Mon-Fri 10-6 (Thurs until 7); Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, CCG, merch) 01224 622131

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 40-41 South Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1LL. Mon-Wed 10-5.30; Thurs 10-6.30; Fri-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5. (imp, STO, s-p, ind, merch, foreign) 0131 558 8226

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 168 Buchanan Street, Glasgow G1 2LW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0141 331 1215

Justice Comics, Unit 36, The Arcade, Stirling FK8 1AX. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch) 01786 447687

Kapow!, 28 Allison Street, Govanhill, Glasgow G42 8NN (off Pollokshaws Road). Tues-Sat 11-6 (buy and sell back, gn, ind, mags, videos, DVDs, new and second-hand books, merch) 0141 4241600

Plan 9, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen AB25 1NE. Mon-Sat 10-5 (Thurs to 6); Sun 1-4. (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, WWF, merch, sci-fi) tel/fax: 01224 624467

Red Hot Comics, Block D Unit 7, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH. Sat 11.30-6; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0141 630 0049

Northern Ireland

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 47 Winetavern Street, Belfast BT1 1JQ Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 028 90438744

NEW **Planet Ace Derry**, 33 Shipquat Street, Derry, Londonderry BT48 6DF. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) 02871 369787

Retail Index: USA

When telephoning from outside the USA, include the bracketed 00. Out-of-town US calls begin with the 1 prefix only. The following is a fraction of the estimated 3,000+ US comics stores.

Alabama

Optic Nerve, 1930 12th Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205 (film, newsstand, ind) (00)1 205 933 2787

Alaska

Bosco's in Spenard, 2606 Spenard Road, Anchorage 99503. Mon-Sat 11-8, Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, merch) (00) 1 907 274 4112

Bosco's Diamond Centre, 800 East Diamond Boulevard, Anchorage 99577. Mon-Fri 10-9; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, games, Star Wars/Trek) (00) 1 907 344 3963

Bosco's in Eagle River, 11432 Business Boulevard, Eagle River. Mon-Sat 12-8, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, merch) (00) 1 907 696 5166

Arizona

Lost Dutchman, 747 West Camelback Road, Phoenix, AZ 85013. Mon-Sun 10-7. (new, back) (00)1 619 278 0371

California

Comickaze, 5525 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, San Diego, CA 62117-2342. Mon-Fri 11-7; Sat 11-6; Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 858 278 0371

Comix Experience, 305 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, CA 94117. Mon-Sat 11-7; Sun 12-5 (new, back) (00)1 415 863 9258

Flying Colors Comics, 2980 Treat Blvd, Concord, CA 94518. Mon-Sat 11-7 (Fri until 8); Sun 12-6 (new, back, ind, cards, merch) (00)1 510 825 5410

Lee's Comics, Inc., 1020-F N Rengstorff Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94043. Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, s-p, adult, merch) (00)1 650 965 1800

Lee's Comics, Inc., 2222 South El Camino Real, San Mateo, CA 94403. Mon-Sun 10-9, (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, adult, s-p, merch) (00)1 650 571 1489

Meltdown Comics & Collectibles, 7522 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90046 (toys, comics, books) (00)1 323 851 7223

Stand-Up Comics, 10020 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. Mon-Fri 11 7; Sat-Sun 11-6 (new, back, cards, anime, CCG, merch) (00)1 510 525 3344

Third Planet, 3822 Sepulveda Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90505. Sun-Thurs 11-8; Fri + Sat 11-9 (new, ind, back, CCG, RPG, GW, sci-fi/fantasy, anime, merch) (00)1 310 791 6227

Hawaii

Gecko Books & Comics, 3613 Waialae Avenue, Honolulu, 96816. Mon-Sun 9-9 (new, back, cards, toys, merch) (00)1 808 732 1292

Illinois

Comic Kingdom, 5941 W Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60634. (new, back) (00)1 773 545 2231

Louisiana

Comic Cosmos, 343 W Esplanade Avenue, Kenner, LA 70065. Mon-Thur 11.30-7, Fri-Sat 11-7.30, Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, CCG, toys, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

Crescent City Comics & Cards, 6111 Elysian Fields, New Orleans, LA 70122. Mon-Sat 11-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

More Fun Comics, 8200 Oak Street, New Orleans, LA 70118. Tues-Sat 11-7, Sun-Mon 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, merch, toys, CDs) (00)1 504 865 1800

Maine

Casablanca Comics, 151 Middle Street, Portland, ME 04101. Mon-Sat 10-9, Sun 12-7 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, merch, art) (00)1 207 780 1676

Casablanca Comics, 778 Roosevelt Trail, Windham, ME 04062. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, merch)(00)1 207 892 0056

Massachusetts

Comicopia, 464 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215. Mon-Sun 11-7 (Wed 10-8) (new, merch, CCG, manga, tpbk)(00)1 617 266 4266

Minnesota

Uncle Sven's Comic Shoppe, 1838 St Clair Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105. Mon-Fri 3-6, Sat 11-4 (new, back, tpbk, gn, videos, action figures, CCG, RPG; est 19 years) (00)1 651 699 3409

New York State

Earthworld Comics, 327 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12206. Mon-Wed 11-6; Thur-Fri 11-7, Sat 11-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, ind, manga/anime, cards, merch) (00)1 518 465 5495

Forbidden Planet (**FPI** associate), 840 Broadway (at 13th St, NY 10003. Mon-Sat 10-10; Sun 12-10. (new, ind, back, RPG, merch, fantasy) (00)1 212 473 1576

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 4 West 33rd Street (opposite Empire State Building), NY 10001. Mon-Sat 9am-11pm; Sun 10-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 212 268 7088

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 325 New Dorp Lane, Staten Island, NY 10306. Mon-Sun; 12-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 718 351 6299

Midtown Comics, 200 West 40th Street, NY 10018 (00)1 212 302-8192

Ohio

The Laughing Ogre, 4258 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43214. Mon-Sat 10-9; Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 614 267 6473

Oklahoma

Time Warp, 588 SE Washington Street, Bartlesville, OK 74006 (new, back, cards, games, toys, CDs, sci-fi/fantasy) (00)1 918 335 3373

Pennsylvania

Comic Castle, 17 West Fourth Street, Williamsport, PA 17703 Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back) (00)1 717 322 8763

Golden Eagle, Berkshire Square, 1159 Berkshire Boulevard, Wyoming, PA 19610 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 376 8255

Golden Eagle, Fairgrounds Square Mall, Reading, PA 19605 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 921 3160

Tennessee

Collector's World, 1511 E Main Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37130. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, Hickory Plaza South Central, 5751 Nolensville Road, Nashville, TN 37211. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, 10820 Kingston Park #10, Knoxville, TN 37922 Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 423 675 6830

Collector's World, 4006 Granny White Park, Nashville, TN 37204 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 615 385 8136

Texas

Cliff's Comics, 2205 West Berry Street, Fort Worth, TX 76110. (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 817 927 7172

Collectible Heroes, 502 West Calton Road #307, Laredo, TX 78041. Mon-Wed 2-7.30; Thurs-Sat 11.30-7.30 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 956 791 8428

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy, 616 West 34th Street, Austin, TX 78705 (new, back, games, anime, miniatures, prl) (00)1 512 454 2399

Virginia

There Comics, 3514 Oaklawn Boulevard, Hopewell, VA 23860. Mon-Sat 11-7, (new, back, Silver Age, sci-fi, M:TG, cards, vinyl)(00)1 804 458 9561

Trilogy Shop, 700 E Little Creek Road, Norfolk, VA 23518. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, merch) (00)1 757 587 2540

Wisconsin

Lost World of Wonders, 6713 West Oklahoma Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53219 (00)1 414 328 4651

Direct Market Retailers:

***Comics International**'s Retail Index is THE international retail reference source for collectors, creators, publishers and journalists. Through it you can reach over 40,000 dedicated readers each issue for only £6 (US $10) a month! Bookable in 6-issue blocks, retailers wishing to be included should send US $60 or £36 (UK: please add £6.30 to cover VAT @ 17.5%) plus shop information as detailed on previous page to:*

Retail Index, Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ, England

Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International. Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail: Listings@comicsinternational.com

The letters **(FPI)** after various entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Retailers: International

Australia

Arcadia Unbound, 267 Forest Road, Hurstville, NSW 2220. Mon-Fri 10.30-7, Sat 10-4, Sun 12-3 (imp, back, manga, merch, CCG) (0061) 2 9585 1489

Books & Bounties/Comics Haven, 157a Charters Towers Road, Townsville, Queensland 4812. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG, CCG) (0061) 7 4779 2408

Fan Attic, 1st Floor, 91 Elizabeth Street, Brisbane, Queensland 4002. Mon-Sun 9.30-5.30 (toys, Star Wars, sci-fi collectibles) (0061) 7 3221 1420

Kinda Lotsa Comics and Stuff, Shop 4, 503-511 King Street, Newtown, Sydney, NSW. Mon-Sat 10.30-7.30 (back, toys, merch)(0061) 2 9565 1054

Known Space Books, 1st Floor, 108 Gawler Place, Adelaide, SA 5000. Wed-Sat 12-6 (US/UK back) (0061) 8 8223 4304

Phantom Zone, 23 Anderson Street, Chatswood, NSW 2067. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9411 3709

Phantom Zone, 198 Mann Street, Gosford, NSW 2250. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 43 25 4599

Phantom Zone, 207 George Street, Liverpool, NSW. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9601 2622

Phantom Zone, 285 Hunter Street, Newcastle, NSW. 2300. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4929 5717

Phantom Zone, 101a Argyle Street, Parramatta, NSW 2150 Mon-Fri 9-6; Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, books, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9891 1848

Phantom Zone, 268 Crown Street, Wollongong, NSW. 2500. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4228 7393

Austria

Comic Treff, Getreidemarkt 2-4, 1010 Vienna. Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 10-1 (imp, back, gn, CCG) (0043) 11 586 76 27

Belgium

Forbidden Zone, 25 Rue de Tamines, 1060 Brussels. (3 floors; imp, back, merch, US/French, STO, toys) (0032 2) 534 63 67 (fax 538 24 52)

Canada

Connection MD, 1539 Van Horne Avenue, Montreal, Quebec H2V 1L4. Mon-Sat 11-6 (new, merch, back, CCG) (00)1 514 948 2627

Dragon Lady Comics & Paper Nostalgia, 609 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1B5. (00)1 416 536 7460

Little Shop of Heroes, 160 Wallace Avenue, South Listowel, Ontario N4W 1X9 (00)1 519 291 2281

Silver Snail Comic Shop, 367 Queen Street West, Toronto M5V 2A4. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs-Fri 11-8; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (00)1 416 593 0889

France

Album, 67 boulevard St Germain, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 53 10 00 60

Album, 6 rue Dante, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 43 54 67 09

Alpha Omega, 25 rue de la Clef, 59800 Lille. Mon 2.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 10.30-12.30/2.30-7.30 (imp, back, French, merch, trading/gaming cards, toys, RPG, Wars/Trek, B5, L5R) (0033) 320 319 375

Astro City, 22 rue Masurel, 59800 Lille. Mon 3-7.30; Tue-Sat 10-12.30, 2-7.30 (imp, manga, cards, merch, kits) (0033) 320 55 1010

Impact Comics, 64 rue Condorcet, 75009 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, merch, CCG)(0033) 42 80 30 10

L'Antre des Dragons, 56 rue de Loup, 33000 Bordeaux. Mon-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0033) 55 65 17378

Les Nageurs de Sable, 14 rue Courteline, 37058 Tours. Mon-Sat 11-1/2-7 (imp, back, cards, merch) (0033) 2 47 39 52 40

Pulps, 14 bld Morland, 75004 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, RPG) (0033) 1 42 72 55 25

Germany

Black Dog Comics, Rodenberg Strasse 9, 10439 Berlin. Mon-Fri 11-6.30, Sat 11-2 (imp, back, gn, t/cards) (0049) 30 4473 6486

Grober Unfug, Zossenerstrasse 32-33, 10961 Berlin. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0049) 30 6940 1490

Greece

Metropolis Comics, 94 Metropoleos St, 54622 Thessaloniki. Mon-Sat 10.30-3.30/7.30-11.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0030) 3 193 7775

Solaris, 6 Botasi Str, 10682, Athens. Mon-Sat 9-3.30/5-8.30 (imp, back, gn, merch) (0030) 1 384 1065

Holland

Henk Lie's Comics & Manga Store, Zeeduk 104, 1012BB Amsterdam. Mon-Sat 11-6; Sun 11-9 (imp, cards, merch, CCG) (0031) 20 421 3688

Hungary

Troll Kepregenyta'r, Terez Krt 13, Budapest 1067. Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 10-1(imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0036) 1 322 6026

Irish Republic

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5-6 Crompton Quay, Dublin 2. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Thurs 10-7); Sun 12-5 (imp, back, ind, merch, u/g, UK, gn, STO) (0035) 3167 10688

Sub-City Comics, 2 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3167 71902

Sub-City Comics, Unit 10, Level 1, Corbettcourt Centre, Eyre Square, Galway. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3915 65994

The 3rd Place, Crow Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3163 36965

Italy

Avalon, via Battisti 9/b, Bologna. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 051 234459

Avalon, via Pedriali 21, Forli. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 0543 33523

Avalon, via Settembrini 20, Milan. Mon 3.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 022 9400410

Avalon, via Foscolo 3, Padova. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7. (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch)(0039) 049 658290

Avalon, via Bissolati 68, Rome. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, cards, merch)

Avalon, via Magenta 0, Torino. Mon 3.30-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1, 2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 011 5617252

Forbidden Planet, via Pinerolo 11/15, 00182 Rome (imp, back, gn) (0039) 06 70305702

Il Marchio Giallo, via Deghi Scipioni 116, Rome. Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, merch, kits) (0039) 06 361 40 60

La Borsa del Fumetto, via Lecco 16, 20124 Milano. (imp, back, European and RPG, CCG) (0039) 11 5617252

Malaysia

The Mind Shop, Starhill Centre, Jalang Bukit Bintag, Kuala Lumpur. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 241 8871

The Mind Shop, S 58 Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 719 8246

The Mind Shop, Jin SS21/39, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 717 6602

New Zealand

Heroes For Sale, Level 2, 62 Queen St, Auckland. Mon-Sat 10-7 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g)(0064) 9 307 0682

Whitcoulls Corner Branch, 210 Queen Street, Private Bag 92098, Auckland. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, s-p, merch, ind, u/g) (0064) 9 356 5400 (fax: 9 356 5408)

Portugal

BdMania, Rua das Flores 67-71 R/C, 1200 Lisboa. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, CCG, merch) (00351) 21 346 1207

Interzona, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Loja 203, Rua Luis Veaga Lertao 98-120, 6050 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

Mundo Fantasma, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Rua Luis Veiga Leitao, 98/120, 1 Andar-Loja 203, 4050-399 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (US imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

South Africa

Euroniag, Shop 79A, East Rand Mall, Boksburg, Johannesburg. Mon-Sun 9-10 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0027) 11 896 3773

Zed Bree's Comic Universe, Mediterr-anean Building, 24 Tenth Ave, Edenvale 1610 Gauteng. 9.30-6 (imp, merch, gn, CCG) 002711 453 4215 (fax 453 4459)

Spain

Gigamesh, RDA San Pedro 53, 08010 Barcelona. Mon-Sat 10-1.30/4.30-8 (imp, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0034) 3 246 6359

Sweden

Comics Heaven, Stora Nygatan 23, 11127 Stockholm. Mon-Sat 10-6.30 (imp, back, gn, merch)(0046) 8 202516

Switzerland

Analph Comicladen Strassburgstr, 10 PO Box 1030, 8004 Zürich. (0041) 1 2419695 fax 1 2403442

The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicate that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

International Festivals

A listing of the world's major comics festivals and conventions. For further information, call the organisers on the phone, fax or e-mail numbers provided. To view updates, contact them on their websites. Organisers' estimates of their previous year's attendance is given in brackets.

November 29-30: England

MEMORABILIA '03, NEC, Birmingham. Organisers: Made in Heaven, 1 Star Street, Moffat, Dumfriesshire DG10 9DR. Tel: 01683 220787 fax: 01683 220798. Website: www.memorabilia.co.uk

January 22-25: France

ANGOULEME BD. Organisers: Festival International de la Bande Dessinee, 2 Place d l'Hotel de Ville, 16000 Angouleme, France. Tel: 0033 05 45 97 86 50 fax: 0033 05 45 95 99 28. E-mail: b.monchart@labd.com Website: www.labd.com

March 5-7: United States

MEGACON 2004, Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando, Florida. Organisers MegaCon, 4023 Tampa Road - Suite 2400, Oldsmar, Florida 34677, USA. Tel: 001 813 891 1702. E-mail: info@megaconvention.com Website: www.megaconvention.com

April: England

MEMORABILIA '04, NEC, Birmingham. Organisers: Made in Heaven, 1 Star Street, Moffat, Dumfriesshire DG10 9DR. Tel: 01683 220787 fax: 01683 220798. Website: www.memorabilia.co.uk Date: TBA

May 15-16: England

LONDON EXPO, ExCel Convention Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London E16. Organisers:London Expo (EW), PO Box 38727, London E10 7YH. Tel: 020 8523 1074. E-mail: infohelp@londonexpo.com Website: www.londonexpo.com

May 21-23: Finland

ARCTIC COMICS FESTIVAL, KEMI. Organisers: The Arctic Comics Centre, Rautatienkatu 13 B, FIN-90100 Oulu, Finland. Tel/fax: 00358 400 514 540. E-mail: ilpo.koskela@graafinenstudio.com Website: www.kemi.fi/sarjis

May 29-30: England

Comics Festival 2004, The Empire and Commonwealth Museum and Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol. Organiser: Kev F. Sutherland. Website: www.sitsvac.org

May: Spain

THE 22ND BARCELONA INTERNATIONAL COMIC FESTIVAL. (2003 est: 85,000). Organisers: Ficomic, Palau, 4 Baixos, 08002 Barcelona, Spain. Tel: 0034 93 301 23 69 fax: 0034 93 301 52 26. Website: www.ficomic.com

June 10-13: Switzerland

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LA BANDE DESSIGNEE DE SIERRE. Organisers: Festival BD Sierre, CP 200, CH-3960 Sierre, Switzerland. Tel: 0041 27 455 90 43 fax: 0041 27 455 91 01. E-mail: festival@bdsierre.ch

July 22-25: United States

COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL '04, San Diego, California. (2003 est: 53,000). Organisers: Comic-Con International, PO Box 128458, San Diego, CA 92112-8458. Tel: 001 619 491 2475 fax: 001 619 414 1022. Website: www.comic-con.org

July: England

MEMORABILIA '04, NEC, Birmingham. (2003: 18,853). Organisers: Made in Heaven, 1 Star Street, Moffat, Dumfriesshire DG10 9DR. Tel: 01683 220787 fax: 01683 220798. Website: www.memorabilia.co.uk Date: TBA

August 13-15: United States

WIZARD WORLD CHICAGO CON 2004. (2003 est: 35,000) Organisers: Wizard World Chicago, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920-2064. Tel: 001 608 226 0200. Website: www.wizarduniverse.com

August: Canada

CANADIAN NATIONAL COMIC BOOK EXPO '04, Metro Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Ontario. (2003 attendance: 15,000)

Comics Publishers

North America

Unlike Europe, North American publishers invariably favour indie status to that of being labelled small press. This results in there being hundreds of comics publishers.

While circulations vary immensly, the following are the continent's major comicbook producers with titles printing between 5,000 and 150,000 copies. Contact phone numbers are given where readily available.

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, PO Box 1674 Station C, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2 (Cerebus)

ABSTRACT STUDIOS, PO Box 271487, Houston, TX 77277-1487 (Strangers in Paradise)

AC COMICS, PO Box 521216, Longwood, FL 32752-1216 (adventure titles, Golden Age superhero and western reprints)

ACCLAIM COMICS, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542 (game tie-in adventure, Valiant superhero imprint. dormant) (00)1 516 656 5000

AiT/PLANET LAR, 2034 47th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116 (graphic novels) (00)1 415 504 7516

ALTERNATIVE COMICS, 503 North West 37th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32609-2204 (alternative and graphic novels) (00)1 352 373 6336

AMERICAN MEDIA CONSUMER ENTERTAINMENT, INC, 600 East Coast Avenue, Lantana, Florida 33464 (Cracked) (00)1 561 586 1111

ANTARCTIC PRESS, 7272 Wurzbach, Suite 204, San Antonio, Texas TX 78240 (adventure and US manga)

ARCHIE COMIC PUBLICATIONS, 325 Fayette Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543 (humour) (00)1 914 381 5155

AVATAR PRESS, 9 Triumph Drive, Urbana, Illinois, IL 61802 (horror fantasy titles) (00)1 217 384 2211

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT, 9744 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 402, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, CA 90212 (adventure titles; dormant)

BONGO ENTERTAINMENT,1440 South Sepulveda Boulevard, 3rd Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (The Simpsons and related humour titles) (00)1 310 966 6168

CALIBER COMICS, PO Box 6191, Plymouth, MI 48170 (black and white adventure titles) (00)1 734 462 0457

CARTOON BOOKS, PO Box 16973, Columbus, OH43216 (Bone and related)

CROSSGENERATION COMICS, 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, FL 34677 (fantasy adventure) (00)1 813 891 1702

CRUSADE FINE ARTS LTD, PO Box 845, Bayport, NY 11705 (fantasy and adventure) (00)1 631 472 2866

DARK HORSE COMICS, 10956 South East Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222 (adventure titles, licensed, US and Japanese manga) (00)1 503 652 8815

DC COMICS, 1700 Broadway, NY 10019 (adventure and humour, MAD, Vertigo and Paradox Press imprints) (00)1 212 636 5400

DISNEY COMICS, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, CA 91521 (humour titles) (00)1 818 507 5739

DRAWN & QUARTERLY, PO Box 48056, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2V 4SB (black and white biog)

DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS, 2750 14th Avenue, Suite 302, Markham, Ontario L3R 0B6, Canada

DYNAMIC FORCES, 155 Ninth Avenue, Suite E, Runnemede, NJ 08078 (variant editions and merchandise) (00)1 856 312 1040

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 7563 Lake City Way North East, Seattle, Washington 98115 (adventure, biographical and Eros adult) (00)1 206 524 1967

HARRIS COMICS, 1115 Broadway, 8th Floor, NY 10010 (Vampirella, fantasy and horror) (00)1 212 807 7100

HARVEY COMICS ENTERTAINMENTS, 100 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 91401 (humour) (00)1 310 451 3377

HEAVY METAL, 100 Merrick Road, Suite 400 East, The Rockville Center, NY 11570 (adult fantasy magazines and spin-off editions) (00)1 516 594 2130

HUMANOIDS PUBLISHING, PO Box 931658, Hollywood, California CA 90093 (US-European editions) (00)1 714 2880200

IMAGE COMICS, 1440 North Harbor Boulevard, Suite 305, Fullerton, CA 92835 (adventure) (00)1 714 2880200

MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, 10th Floor, East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016 (adventure, humour and licensed) (00)1 212 696 0808

NBM PUBLICATIONS, 185 Madison Avenue, Suite 1504, NY 10016 (adult fantasy graphic novels and magazines)

ONI PRESS, 6336 South East Milwaukie Avenue, PMB 30, Portland, OR 97202 (adventure) (00)1 503 233 1377

RADIO COMIX, 11765 West Avenue, PMB 117, San Antonio, TX 78216 (anthropomorphic manga) (00)1 210 348 7195

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT, INC, PO Box 128, Stanhope, NJ 07874 (adult)

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS PUBLISHING, 848 The Almeda, San Jose, CA 95126 (black and white fantasy) (00)1 408 279 0451

TOP COW, 10390 Santa Monica Boulevard #110, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (adventure and licensed)

TOP SHELF PRODUCTIONS, PO Box 1282, Marietta, GA 30061-1282 (alternative and biographical) (00)1 770 425 0551

TWOMORROWS PUBLISHING, 1812 Park Drive, Raleigh, North Carolina, NC 27605 (comics feature magazines) (00)1 919 833 8092

VEROTIK PRESS, PO Box 64859, Los Angeles, CA 07043 (adult fantasies)

VIZ COMICS, PO Box 77010, San Francisco, CA 94107 (English translated manga)

WaRP GRAPHICS, 43 Haight Avenue, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 (Elfquest and spin-offs) (00)1 914 473 9277

WILDSTORM, 7910 Ivanhoe Street, #438 La Jolla, CA 92037 (includes ABC, Cliffhanger and Homage DC subsidiary imprints)

United Kingdom

The following are major UK newsstand comics and graphic novel publishers. If calling from outside of the UK, you should drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe and Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

DC THOMSON, Albert Square, Dundee DD1 9QJ (humour and adventure comics, pocket books and annuals)

EGMONT MAGAZINES LTD, 25-31 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SU (humour, licensed and pre-school titles) 020 7344 6400

HAMLYN BOOKS, 2-4 Heron Quays, London E14 4JB (2000 AD graphic novels) 020 7531 8584

I FEEL GOOD LTD, 9 Dollington Street, London EC1V 0BQ (Viz) 020 7687 7000

JOHN BROWN PUBLISHING, The Boathouse, Crabtree Lane, Fulham, London SW6 (albums) 020 7381 6007

KNOCKABOUT COMICS, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (humour and underground comix, graphic novels) 020 8969 2945

PANINI COMICS (UK), Panini House, Coach and Horses Passage, The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TM2 5UJ (humour and adventure titles, Marvel licensed) 01892 500 100

REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS LTD, The Studio, Brewer Street, Oxford OX11QN (Judge Dredd Megazine and 2000 AD) 01865 792201

THE REDAN COMPANY, Canon Court East, Abbey Lawn, Shrewsbury SY2 5DE (pre-school humour and licenced titles) 01743 364433

SAVOY BOOKS, 446 Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 3BW (adult comic magazines, books and graphic novels) 0161 833 2664

TITAN ENTERTAINMENT GROUP LTD, Titan House, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP (licensed graphic novels, books, magazines and comics) 020 7620 0200

France

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0033 becomes 011 33

ALBIN MICHEL, 22 rue Huyghens, 75014 Paris (albums) (0033) 1 42 79 10 00

CASTERMAN, 66 rue Bonaparte, 75006, Paris (albums and manga) (0033) 1 40 51 28 00

DARGAUD, 6 rue Gager Gabillot, 75015 Paris (albums and manga) (0033) 1 40 45 35 39

DELCOURT, 5 passage du Mont-Cenis, 75018 Paris (albums and comics) (0033) 1 53 41 86 10

FLUIDE GLACIAL, 33 avenue du Main, BP 187, 75755 Paris (comics and albums) (0033) 1 43 20 23 96

GLENAT, 31 rue Ernest Renan, 92130 Issy les Moulineaux (albums and manga) (0033) 1 41 46 11 11

J'AI LU, 84 rue de Grenelle, 75007 Paris (licenced Japanese manga) (0033) 1 44 39 34 70

LES HUMANOIDES ASSOCIES, 24 avenue Philippe Auguste, 75011 Paris (albums)(0033) 1 44 93 88 33

MARVEL, BP 62, 06702 St Laurent Duvar (0033) 1 92 12 57 57

SEMIC FRANCE, 45 rue Broca, 75005 Paris (licenced comics and albums) (0033) 1 43 36 32 00

Italy

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0039 becomes 011 39

SERGIO BONELLI EDITORE, via Buonarroti 38, 20145 Milano (black and white comics) (0039) 02 96480403

MARVEL ITALIA, viale Emilio Po' 380, 41100 Modena (Marvel licensed titles)

CULT COMICS, viale Emilio Po' 380, 41100 Modena (Image and Dark Horse licensed)

MAGIC PRESS, Zona industriale via Ragusa 18, 00040 Pavona, Roma (Vertigo and WildStorm licensed) fax: (0039) 06 93020361

STAR COMICS, strada Selvette 1bis/1 Bosco (PG) (comics and black and white manga)

ASTORINA S.R.I., via Boccaccio 32, 20123 Milano (Diabolik original and reprint black and white)

KING COMICS, via Pinerolo 3, 00182 Roma (comics)

Spain

The following are the country's comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0034 becomes 011 34

NORMA EDITORAL, Fluvià 89, 08019 Barcelona (licensed DC and Dark Horse comics and albums) 0034 93 303 68 20

EDITORIAL PLANETA-DE AGOSTINI, SA, Aribau 185, 08021 Barcelona (licensed Dark Horse comics and albums)

TOUTAIN EDITOR, SA, Diagonal 325, E-08009 Barcelona (licensed Marvel, Dark Horse, Chaos!, Image and manga comics and albums) 0034 93 344 06 00

EDICIONES LA CÚPULA, Plaza de las Beatas 3, E-08003 Barcelona (adult comics and albums) 0034 32 682 8 05

Mail Order Specialists

Key to abbreviations used:

w/s	= wholesale available	CoBRA	= Comic Book Retailers' mail order protection scheme
dis	= bulk discount terms		
cat	= phone/write for catalogue	cc	= major credit cards accepted
s-cat	= sae for catalogue		
wants	= wants lists accepted	sae	= send stamped, addressed envelope with enquiry
s-wants	= sae with wants lists		

When telephoning from outside the UK, drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe & Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

Golden Age

Generally acknowledged as being published between 1938 and 1945, the first age of superhero comics, but herein designated to cover all pre-Silver Age American comics.

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Silver Age

*Accepted as starting in 1955 with DC's superhero rebirth through **Detective Comics** #225 (intro-ducing the Martian Manhunter) and **Showcase** #4 (introducing the Barry Allen Flash). Herein covering titles up to late 1960s.*

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

East Coast Comics UK, 28 Acton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 7LG (high grade, s-want, cc, sae) 01502 578385 (day) 560727 (eve)

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Quicksilver Comics, PO Box 73, Ossett WF5 0YQ (s-cat, dis, wants, cc, CoBRA) 01924 270500 (fax: 270919)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax 680686)

Post-Silver Age

Comics from 1970 to date: From Bronze Age-Marvel Age-Lead Age up to Platinum Age-Gimmick Age-Image Age. Historians will doubtless eventually decide on a name.

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Tarpaulin Books and Comics, 5 Oak Close, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3EZ (wants, s-cat) 01842 820139

Hot Comics

Current or key titles, first issues or first appearances of major characters. Investment titles for speculators willing to gamble.

A Place in Space, 101 Church Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RN (wants, cc, dis) 020 8686 2400

Comix-shop. co.uk, 7a High Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1JN (wants, cat, cc) 01628 777998

Advance Imports

US comics are not generally available in UK newsagents, except for some sea-freight shipped low-cover price DCs and Marvels, and can only be found through specialists in the rest of the world. The following companies offer air-shipped copies from all of the major US publishers.

Ace Comics, 63/64 High Street, Colchester, Essex (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 01206 561912

Avalon Comics, 143 Lavender Hill, London SW11 5QJ (cc, CoBRA) 020 7924 3609

Comix-shop.co.uk, 7a High Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1JN (wants, cat, cc) 01628 777998

86th Floor Comics & Cards, 6 Shipley Common Lane, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8TR (dis, cat, cc) 0115 9443009

Forbidden Planet, 71 New Oxford Street, London WC1A 1DG (s-cat cc) 020 7497 2150

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH 020 7636 1011

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse,* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Red Hot Comics, The Warehouse Block D Unit 8, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH (CoBRA, w/s, dis, wants, cc) tel/fax: 0141 630 0049

Limited Editions

Many high-profile miniseries and one-shots are also available in limited, numbered and often autographed editions (s&n). New titles, to acquire copyright, can also appear in small print-run "ashcan" editions (ash).

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (CoBRA, cc, ash, s&n, cat) 020 8446 3464

Trading Cards

Several mail order dealers carry a range of non-sports cards and related peripherals (files, folders, sleeves).

Beyond Comics, 76 Harlescott Road, Nunhead, London SE15 3BZ (s-cat, s-wants, sae, CoBRA) tel/fax: 020 7564 4213

John McDonald: Non-Sport Trading Cards, 20 Alder Grove, Coatbridge, Lanarkshire ML5 3PT (cat, wants) tel/fax: 01236 433358

Old British Titles

The popularity of old British comics continues to increase as more dealers expand into this area. The following specialise in such titles.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Weird Fantasy, 19 Decoy Road, Ormesby, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR29 3LG (s-cat, s-wants, annuals specialist)

Merchandise

Comics, film and TV-related t-shirts, posters, video games, badges, toys, action figures, etc.

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton, Beds LU1 2TP. (specialists in Star Trek, Star Wars and sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Original Art

With artists having their originals returned by publishers, an increasing number of pages are now being made available for collectors.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Peripherals

Acid-free protection for comics. Backing boards, protective bags, storage boxes, etc.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Just Comics, 65 Station Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 2TH (w/s only, CollectorLine™ distributor) 01487 824895 01487 824896

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse,* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

General Fantasy

As well as comics old and new, some suppliers also provide catalogues of multi-media fantasy, covering TV, film, trading cards and toys.

Forbidden Planet Mail Order, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP (cat) 020 7803 1900 (fax: 7803 1901)

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Manga Titles

English language translations of Japanese comics and US titles drawn in the Japanese style.

United Publications, 85 Croydon Road, Keston, Kent BR2 8HU (ind, back, cat, wants, cc) 020 8325 9507

Alternative & Biographical

The following carry an extensive range of biographical and slice-of-life comicbooks and graphic novels (Fantagraphics, Maus, Crumb, Pekar...)

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH (wants) 020 7636 1011

Knockabout Comics, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (w/s, s-cat, cc) 020 8969 2945 (fax: 8968 7614)

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY 0115 9508045

Comics Auctions

Accepting lots from the general public, comics auctions provide an alternative way for collectors to sell their valuable comics. The following accept items for sale, as well as providing regular catalogues for mail order bids.

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Distributors

Anybody considering opening a comics shop or becoming a mail order dealer can obtain further information about the supply of titles from the following who bulk air import US and European comics and related items on a weekly basis.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP (graphic novels, art books, comics, remainders, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8768 0022

Diamond Comic Distributors, 2nd Floor, Warton House, 150 High Street, London E15 2NP (US and European comics, cards and related items) 020 8536 5730 (fax: 8536 5736)

Red Route Distribution, Unit 24, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (US & European comics/ graphic novels, back-list specialists) 020 8960 5855

Turnaround Publisher Services, Unit 3, Olympia Trading Estate, Coburg Road, Wood Green, London N22 6TZ (graphic novels, art books, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8829 3000

Mail Order Dealers:

CI's Mail Order Index is the industry's most cost-effective and highly-targeted way to reach a huge dedicated audience in excess of 40,000 readers every month. It costs only £4 ($6 US) per entry per issue to appear and is bookable in advance as a 6-issue series. Send pre-payment of £24/$36 (plus £4.20 VAT for UK advertisers) per category with your details to:

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International. Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail: Listings@comicsinternational.com

The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Classified

Advertising terms and conditions

Whether for publication or not, all advertisements must be accompanied by full name, home address and daytime phone number of advertiser.

• All private classified Wants or Announcements ads (comics or card related items only) are free of charge. Maximum 50 words, they will be printed at the publisher's discretion when space permits. *(Only one advertisement can be submitted per letter/per issue so everybody gets a chance to fit in!)*

• FOR SALE ads (and dealer wants/announcements) are charged: (i) General announcements: Stating no issue numbers, prices or titles. Per 50 words (or part thereof) ..... £5.00 ($7.50 US) (ii) List ads: (including specific titles, issues and/or prices. Minimum charge, per 100 words (or part thereof) ..... £10.00 ($15.00 US)

Payment (to Comics International) must accompany advertising copy.

CI Classified, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

For Sale

Collection of comics for sale: thousands of titles at giveaway prices, featuring Marvel, DC and indie comics from the 1960s to the present. For your full list, send an sae to D. Morrall, 66 Pen-y-graig Road, Townhill, Swansea SA1 6JY.

Latest half-price sale: Many thousands of Marvel, DC and indie comics, all at half price. For your full list of available books send an sae to M. Cruden, 18 Backbower Lane, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 5NS, or phone 0161 366 8226. E-mail mcruden @btinternet.com, or alternatively log on to http://members.lycos.co.uk/mcruden to see the full lists.

Get in first: Next March, Quality Communications will be publishing Dez Skinn's 288-page full colour hardback **Comix: The Underground Revolution** with contributions by Hunt Emerson, Denis Kitchen, Trina Robbins and a host more. Order now for a special pre-publication signed edition. Only £25 (including p&p) from: Quality, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 6JJ.

For sale: Bronze age beauties. DC: **Dark Mansions of Forbidden Love** 1 vfn – £50; **Ghost** 1 vfn – £40; **All Star Western** 10 fn – £30; **New Gods** 1 fn – £10; **Kamandi** 1 fn – £10. Marvel: **Conan** 1 (CGC 9.0) vfn-nm – £200; **X-Men** 95 nm- – £75; **Star Wars** 1 nm – £40; **Tomb of Dracula** 1 fn – £20; **Werewolf by Night** 1 vfn+ – £30; **Monster of Frankenstein** vfn+ 1 – £20, 2 – £10, 3 – £10. Sets: **Kun-Fu Fighter** 1-10 vfn – £22; **Tower of Shadows** 1-9 vfn, 1 and 7 fn – £100; **Marvel Classic Comics** 1-35 nm- – £75; **Inhumans** 1-12 nm-vfn – £30; **Where Monsters Dwell** 1-8 vfn – £60. Contact L. Pitt, 74 Barnstaple Rd, Knowle, Bristol BS4 1JP. Tel: 0117 963 1009

Wanted

Advertisers are reminded that Wanted ads must be no longer than 50 words (including address), and only single insertion private advertisements can be published free of charge.

Wanted: **Kadath** (magazine) fall 1984 – Heroic Fantasy issue, **Gothics** (art folio) by Lee Brown Coye 1967 from New Albion Books. Also **Issues of Whispers** (1970s to 1990s small press Weird Fantasy magazine). Please state which issues. Contact Roger Newson, 32 Rosemary Avenue, Felixstowe, Suffolk IP11 9HX. Tel: 01394 277603 after 6pm.

Wanted: **Faust** 11, **Deep Red** 6 (Chas Balun), **From Hell** (limited S&N hardcover), and any documentaries or articles on Ed Kemper or JErrey Dahmer. Top prices paid! Contact C. Downs, 9 Albemarle Street, Boulevard, Anlaby Road, Hull HU3 3JN. Or text 07961 008997 any time.

Wanted: **Superman**, **Superboy** and **Batman** British annuals from the 1950s and 1960s; **Jack and Jill: All Colour Gift Book** 1953; **T.V. Comic** weeklies and holiday specials from the 1960s and 1970s. Gold Key: **Banana Splits** and **H.R. Pufnstuf**, **Bewitched**. **Archie**: 80-Page Giants only. Pin-up mags: **Kamera**, **Beautiful Brittons**, **Q.T. Spick**, etc. Any Bettie Page material. Write to John Balfour, Westerstraat 67-3, Amsterdam, Holland, 1015 LW.

Announcements

Fanzine and small press titles must not be offered for sale before being printed. To verify publication, a sample copy must be sent in along with the advertising copy (50 words max). Single bookings only, so everybody gets a chance!

Black Boar Press Sketchbook #1, limited to 80 signed and numbered copies. Sketches, and rarely seen art by David Hitchcock, featuring **Springheeled Jack**, **Whitechapel Freak**, **Spirit of the Highwayman** and more. A5, 30+ pages. £3.50 (including postage & packing) cheques to D. Hitchcock, Gunhills Farm, Gunhills Lane, Windley, Derbyshire DE56 2LR.

The O Men 21: The Eagle Award-nominated super-soap continues! The spotlight falls on mortal enemies Doctor O and Anathema as major secrets are revealed! Send £1 to Martin, 19a Trevelyan Road, Tooting, London SW17 9LS. Collections of the early **O Men** issues are also now available! Check out the website: www.theomen.free-online.co.uk

Have you seen **Varicose Brain**? Well, Linda Lusardi, Sebastian Loeb, Frank Quitely and Dale Winton haven't heard of it either! Don't be like all of those losers. Buy **Varicose Brain**. Adult humour but not a masturbatory aid. Only £2. Please send payment to Michelle Corcoran, 32 Hornel Road, Kirkcudbright, Scotland DG6 4LH.

Warren Fanzine. **Spooky** 2 – the second issue. 24-page fanzine, featuring **Creepy**, **Eerie**, **Vampirella** and more! E-mail: piers@spookyfanzine.com. £1.75 including UK postage from Piers Casimir, 14 Burton Close, Wheathampstead AL4 8LU.

At last, the long-delayed **Cosmos Inc** 3 is here! Lesbian mercenary nuns and killer androids abound, so buy it! Also, **Comics Retrospective** 4 is now available, an issue-by-issue look at the All-Star Squadron. Both are $1.20 from Tony Ingram, 3 Lower Harlings, Shotley Gate, Ipswich, Suffolk IP9 1QE.

Twelve years ago a group of frustrated Dan Dare enthusiasts brought together members of Frank Hampson's team to recreate the original just as it had been. Their end product is now available in the new thrice-yearly all-colour A4 magazine **Spaceship Away**. Issue one is on sale in all good specialist outlets, or by post at £7.80 from Rod Barzilay, 8 Marley Close, Preston, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 6DH. Tel: 01305 832617.

The new ANROFuture Trends home-page is up!! Our newsletter is bimonthly, and is 60p inc. New details at: www.alternaterealities.co.uk

The Lord of the Rings, a 40-page critical appreciation of Tolkien's masterpiece, written by Mike Cruden, with full-page illustrations by Tony Schofield. £1 including p&p from Mike Cruden, 18 Backbower Lane, Hyde, Cheshire SK14 5NS.

Bad Tommy Tooth Head, as seen in **CI** #165 *Panel Beaters*, is available now. 50p a copy from David Miles Golding, 120 Queen Elizabeth Drive, Normanton, West Yorkshire WF6 1LR. Or e-mail: dave@ amberland.freeserve.co.uk

Gone a new graphic novel by Nigel Auchterlounie is now available to buy. £6.99 (including p&p) from There Goes Tokyo, 145 Clydesdale Road, Byker, Newcastle NE6 2EQ. Retailers: contact us about our special deals: gonebook@animail.net.

Get **Rat Arsed and Shit Faced 3 – Natural Smoked Kippers** for only £1.50 (cheques payable to D.L. Worrow). Available from Toonadelic Times – 1C, 58 Northgate Street, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1JJ.

The Comics Advertiser, with all the latest small press comics and an article by Rik Hoskin, is free! Available now from all good comics retailers, or for an A4 sae from CAOF Comics, 10 Cleveland Avenue, High Ercall, Telford, Shropshire TF6 6AH. Go demand your free copy now!

The latest instalment of Jason Cobley's **Bulldog Adventure Magazine** is available now. Only £2.50 from Jason Cobley, 94 Elm Road, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 2TB.

Comic Societies

Join The Eagle Society, dedicated to the memory of Britain's National Strip Cartoon Weekly – The Eagle 1950-1969. For just £17 per year (cheques should be made payable to The Eagle Society) members receive our quarterly journal **Eagle Times**, as well as the chance to attend social gatherings and meet original Eagle contributors. Write to the membership secretary: Keith Howard, 25a Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2UA. Or e-mail: Richard.sheat @uk.nestle.com

Comics Creators Guild: The Future of Comics in our Hands. Industry veterans and aspiring professionals. Join the largest comics organisation in Europe. Monthly meetings, newsletter, Comics Forum, exclusive publications, free legal advice, special discounts and more. For further information please contact: Comics Creators Guild, 22 St James Mansions, West End Lane, West Hampstead, London NW6 2AA. www.comicscreators.org.uk

BUY OR SELL OR EVEN TRADE

It's been tried and tested for over 10 years and it's still going strong...

Comics International's *Classified* section has turned more than one £5 "For Sale" advertiser into a big-time full page dealer.

One of the first-read sections of the magazine for both dealers and fans, *Classified* offers you the opportunity to add a part time job to boost your finances.

Most comic fans have unwanted titles taking up valuable space...

... A loft which is in need of clearing.

... A spare room which is no longer spare.

... A garage which is pining for a car.

Classified can help you not only clear that space, but earn you money while doing so. More than 4,500 such ads have been placed on this page, with regular dealers coming back each issue.

It costs only £5 to place a 50-word For Sale general announcement. Or £10 for a 100-word list ad, detailing issues and prices. Ads can appear within a week of you sending them...

So, what are you waiting for? Everybody else to jump in first?

... It's down to you!

Comic & Card Events

THE NATIONAL COLLECTORS MARKETPLACE™

2003 SUNDAY DECEMBER 7

ROYAL NATIONAL HOTEL
BEDFORD WAY
LONDON WC1

2000 AD
ACTION FIGURES
ANIME
BABYLON 5
BRITISH COMICS
BUFFY
COMIC BOOK SUPPLIES
GAMING CARDS

NEW National Photo Gallery Now On Our Website

The National, with 160 tables is the largest regular marketplace for comicbook and trading card collectors in the U.K. You will also find a whole range of related materials including Sci-fi, Fantasy, Film, TV and Toys fromleading British & International dealers.

Due to circumstances beyond our control, the event scheduled for October 26th has had to be re-scheduled for Sunday NOVEMBER 2ND We are sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused.

HOW TO GET THERE. BUS: 68, 91, 168 or 188 to Woburn Place. UNDERGROUND: Piccadilly Line to Russell Square. NATIONAL RAIL: Euston and Kings Cross are within walking distance of the venue.

FUTURE DATE: 1ST FEBRUARY 2004

FREE ADMISSION TO ALL SHOWS
DOORS OPEN 12 NOON

Events @ CAMDEN CENTRE
Bidborough St, London WC1

COMICBOOK MARKETPLACE™

2004 SUNDAY JANUARY 4

FOR AMERICAN COMICBOOKS AND CULT COLLECTABLES

OVER 90 DEALERS TABLES!

The Comicbook Marketplace is held six times a year at the Camden Centre and is just a few minutes walk from Euston, Kings Cross and St. Pancras stations. There are more than ninety tables with over 1,000,000 comicbooks, magazines and trading cards on sale, including S.F., Fantasy, Film and T.V. related items from Britain's top dealers.

HOW TO GET THERE. BUS: 10, 17, 30, 45, 46, 63, 73, 91, 214, or 259 to Kings Cross/Camden Town Hall. UNDERGROUND: Circle, Metropolitan, Piccadilly or Victoria Line to Kings Cross. BRITISH RAIL: Euston, Kings Cross and St. Pancras are within walking distance of the venue.

FUTURE DATE: 7TH MARCH 2004

CARD MART™

2004 SUNDAY JANUARY 11

FOR SPORTS, NON-SPORTS AND COLLECTABLE GAMING CARDS

THE NATION'S TOP TRADING CARD EVENT

Dealers: for table availability phone 020 747 66 873

www.comicmart.co.uk

Events

A summary of all the events advertised this issue

November

29-30/11 Birmingham: Memorabilia '03, Birmingham NEC ..... (p26)

December

6/12 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)
6/12 Oxford: DreddCon 4, Oxford Union Society, St Michael's Street ..... (p4)
7/12 London: The National Comicbook Marketplace and Card Mart, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)
11/12 London: Kevin O'Neill signing at Forbidden Planet Megastore, 179 Shaftesbury Avenue ..... (p21)
13/12 Newcastle: Comic Mart & Card Show, University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road ..... (p56)
13/12 Nottingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street, Nottingham ..... (p56)

January 2004

4/1 London: Comicbook Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way (p66)
11/1 London: Card Mart, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street ..... (p66)
17/1 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p56)
18/1 Liverpool: Comic Mart & Card Show, Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool ..... (p56)
31/1 Glasgow: Scottish Comics, Card & Collectables Fair, James Moir Hall (Mitchell Theatre) Granville Street ..... (p37)
31/1 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p56)

February

1/2 London: The National Comicbook Marketplace and Card Mart, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p66)
7/2 London: The London ABCD Show, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way (p38)
7/2 Newcastle: Comic Mart & Card Show, University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road ..... (p56)
21/2 Sheffield: Comic Mart & Card Show, Main Hall, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street ..... (p56)

March

7/3 London: Comicbook Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way (p66)
27/3 Glasgow: Scottish Comics, Card & Collectables Fair, James Moir Hall (Mitchell Theatre) Granville Street ..... (p37)

May

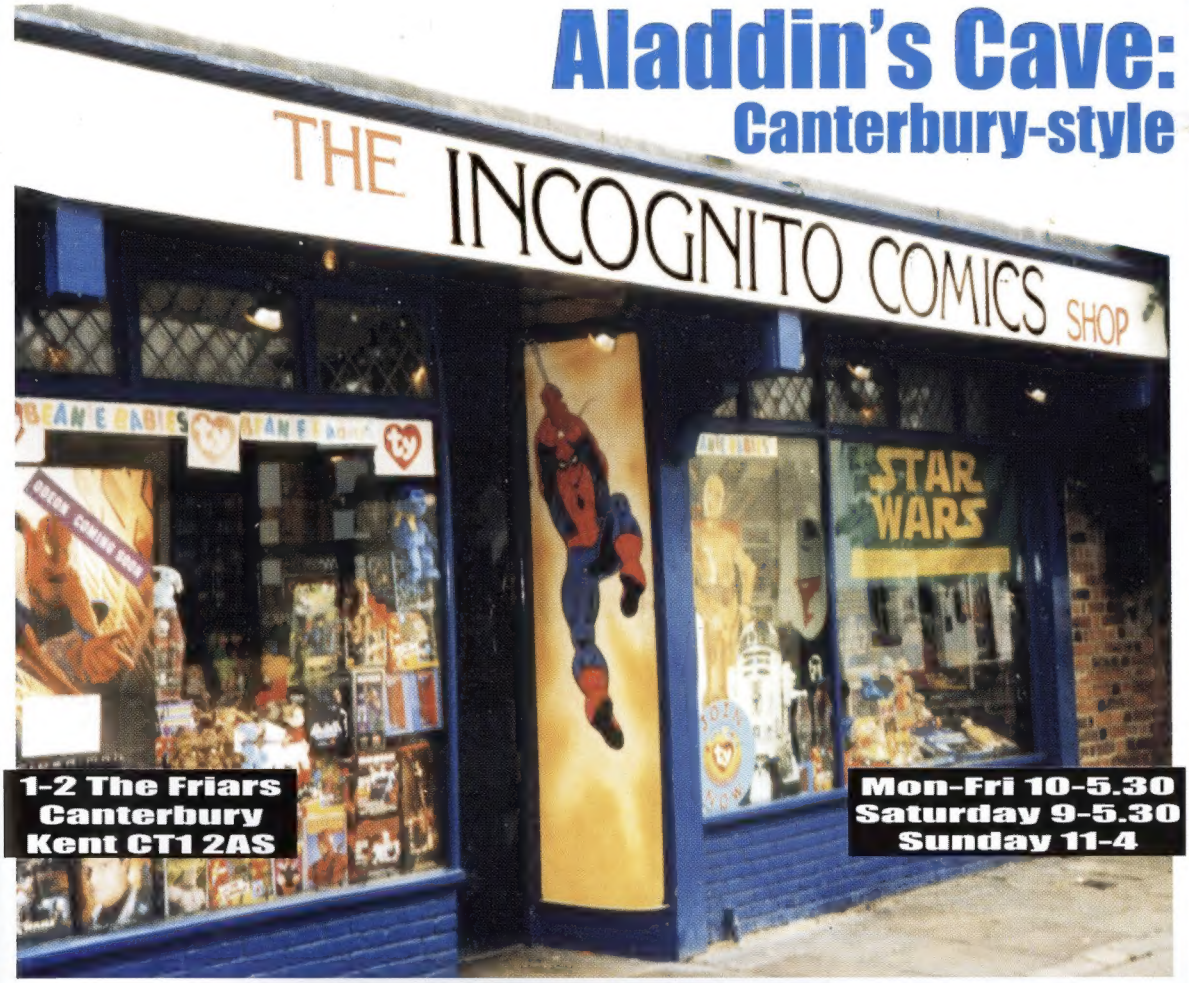
16/5 London: The London ABCD Show, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way (p38)

Please note: the above listing of UK comics, trading card and related events is free to Comics International display advertisers only.

LOOKING FOR INFORMATION ON COMICS-RELATED EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD? SEE OUR INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL GUIDE ON PAGE 58.

ON THE NET? THEN CHECK OUR WEBSITE INDEX WITH EVENT ORGANISER WEB ADDRESSES. SEE PAGE 55

Aladdin's Cave:
Canterbury-style



1-2 The Friars
Canterbury
Kent CT1 2AS

Mon-Fri 10-5.30
Saturday 9-5.30
Sunday 11-4

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